



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY 18 APRIL 2024 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Kaur Saini (Chair)

Councillor Bonham
Councillor Dave
Councillor Surti

Councillor Cassidy
Councillor Kitterick

Also Present:

Mr Bipun Bhakri – Independent Member

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting and led on introductions.

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Adatia and Councillor Whittle.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed.

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

The Chair agreed that due to delays, the minutes from the previous meeting were deferred to allow additional time for review and comment. These will be presented at the next meeting for approval.

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair announced that this meeting would be Grant Patterson's final meeting as an external member of the committee and thanked him for his service and support to the Leicester City Council.

Grant Patterson expressed his gratitude and noted the positive working relationship with the Council.

5. RELATED PARTIES

The Director of Finance submitted a report to the Governance and Audit Committee which presents the report by Grant Thornton on the Council's transactions to Haymarket Consortium Limited.

Grant Patterson, External Auditor for Grant Thornton, presented the related parties transaction report and addressed concerns regarding a transaction involving a loan to Haymarket Consortium Limited.

- It was determined that the loan did not need to be disclosed as a related party transaction under accounting standards nor did it constitute a disclosable interest under the Council's constitution.
- The audit did not find any disclosable interests involving the City Mayor's daughter and the Haymarket. It was concluded that the City Mayor did not have a beneficial interest in HCL, and the relationship did not meet the threshold for disclosure under accounting standards.
- Members of the committee appreciated the report's thoroughness and structure of the report and emphasised the importance of asking questions from an independent viewpoint.
- Members found the report clear and accessible despite the complex subject matter and appreciated the audit's thorough approach.
- Grant Patterson confirmed that the transaction with Haymarket Consortium Limited did not meet the threshold for a related party disclosure under accounting standards. It was concluded that no further actions were necessary regarding this transaction.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the report and provided comments to the External Auditors.

6. Statutory Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

The Director of Finance submitted a report to the Governance and Audit Committee which presents the Statutory Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement for 2022-2023.

The committee discussed the key findings from the audit report presented by Amy Oliver and Grant Patterson.

- Key concerns included issues related to the valuation of property, plant, and equipment, and the implications of a recent cyber-attack.
- Members of the committee raised questions about the need for clearer financial projections and understanding the council's financial position through 2025/26.
- The committee agreed that financial sustainability should be a regular agenda item. The committee approved the ISA 260 report, the statement of accounts, and the letter of representation for 2022/23, with a focus on monitoring financial sustainability and integrating it into future planning.

RESOLVED:

The Governance & Audit Committee:

Noted the auditor's ISA 260 Report (the Audit Findings Report) to those charged with Governance and the recommendations contained within it, attached at Appendix 1.

Approved the Statement of Accounts 2022/23, Appendix 2

Approved the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23, Appendix 2.

Approved the Letter of Representation submitted by the Director of Finance (S151), attached at Appendix 3.

7. External Audit Annual Report 2022/23

The Director of Finance submitted a report to the Governance and Audit Committee which presents the Value for Money report for 2022-2023.

Alexa Ngini, External Auditor for Grant Thornton, presented the External Audit Annual Report, identifying a significant weakness in the Council's financial sustainability. Immediate actions were recommended to address budget gaps.

- Members of the committee emphasized the importance of strategic planning and avoiding last-minute crisis management and appreciated the clarity of the report and the discussion on enhancing internal processes.
- Members recognised the need for increased oversight and strategic management to address these financial challenges, agreeing on the necessity for cross-committee awareness and ongoing monitoring of financial sustainability.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Finance Update report attached at appendix B, to those charged with Governance and passed any comments to the External Auditor.

8. Finance Update

The Director of Finance submitted a report to the Governance and Audit Committee informing of updates including the improvements on accounts at Leicester City Council.

Amy Oliver, Director of Finance, provided an update on the Council's ongoing efforts to enhance financial processes, including continuous training and internal reviews.

- The committee discussed the impact of the recent cyber incident, which has caused delays and may affect the 2023/24 deadlines.
- Emphasis was placed on maintaining strong internal controls and effective governance, particularly considering the challenges to financial sustainability.
- The committee acknowledged the steps being taken to improve these processes and stressed the importance of robust governance and risk management practices.

RESOLVED:

The Governance & Audit Committee noted the report.

9. PRIVATE SESSION

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following reports in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, because they involve the likely disclosure of 'exempt' information, as defined in the Paragraphs detailed below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and taking all the circumstances into account, it was considered that the public interest in maintaining the information as exempt outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.(including the authority).

10. FUTURE OF THE INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE

The Head of Finance submitted a report on the planned changes to the future provision of the Internal Audit Service and work taking place to identify a new provider.

Head of Finance, Colin Sharpe presented the report. Members of the Committee discussed the report and raised a number of points to which officers provided further explanations and assurances. The Chair thanked officers for the report.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That any comments made in the meeting be taken into consideration during future progress on the procurement of a new internal auditor.

11. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 19:30pm