

Cherwell District Council

Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee held at Virtual meeting, on 17 March 2021 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Mike Kerford-Byrnes (Chairman)
Councillor Hugo Brown (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Nathan Bignell
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Tom Wallis
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Substitute Members:

Councillor Shaida Hussain (In place of Councillor Hannah Banfield)

Also Present:

Councillor Barry Wood; Leader of the Council
Maria Grindley, Associate Partner, Ernst & Young (external audit)
Sue Gill, Ernst & Young (external audit)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Hannah Banfield
Councillor Conrad Copeland

Officers:

Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer
Anita Bradley, Director Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance
Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor
Belinda Green, Operations Director - CSN Resources
Joanne Kaye, Strategic Business Partner
Shaista Moughal, Strategic Business Partner
Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader
Sharon Hickson, Democratic and Elections Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

54 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

55 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 January 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

56 **Chairman's Announcements**

Members were informed that item 10 – External Audit update would be presented before item 7 Monthly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring report.

57 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

58 **Monthly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report - January 2021**

The Director of Finance, and Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes submitted a report summarising the Council's Performance, Risk and Finance monitoring position as at the end of January 2021.

The Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes reminded Members that the Committee was responsible for monitoring the risk aspects of the report and reported the significant changes to the Leadership Risk Register.

Resolved

- (1) That the risk aspects of the monthly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report be noted

59 **Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Risk Based Verification**

The Director of Finance submitted a report providing members with an update on the Risk Based Verification (RBV) module including any impacts on the service and to seek approval for the RBV Policy for 2021-2022.

The Operations Director CSN Resources informed Members that in recognition of COVID-19 pandemic the Department of Work and Pensions had introduced the Trust and Protect principle, which allowed local authorities to accept scanned or photocopied documents rather than original documents. Once restrictions had eased, the required evidence would be requested.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That having given due consideration the Risk Based Verification policy for the financial year 2021-2022 be approved

60 **Internal Audit Progress Report 2020/21**

The Director of Finance submitted a report which presented the Internal Audit Progress for 2020/21.

The Chief Internal Auditor informed the Committee that all counter fraud posts had now been filled, with the final Counter Intelligence Officer now in post.

The Chief Internal Auditor highlighted the significant reduction of outstanding management actions for 2018/19 and 2019/20, informing Members that 14 actions for 2018/19 and 18 actions for 2019/20 remained open. The remaining outstanding actions would continue to be reviewed and followed up with the senior management team.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress with the 2020/21 Internal Audit Plan and the outcome of the completed audits be noted.

61 **External Audit Update**

The Director of Finance submitted a report for consideration by Members, containing changes to be incorporated to the draft statement of accounts.

The Assistant Director of Finance gave a brief overview of the 2019/20 accounts, advising Members that as part of the audit carried out there had been material changes to the accounts since the January committee meeting to make corrections identified by management or to address issues raised by the external audit.

Ernst and Young, the council's external auditor, provided an overview of the status of the audit and thanked the Finance department for their assistance during the audit of the accounts.

Resolved

- (1) That the Statement of Accounts 2019/20 with the changes in the annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book) already added, be endorsed, and once the final audit opinion is received the Director Finance (S151 Officer), in consultation with the Chair of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee (or Vice Chair in case the Chairman is

unavailable) be authorised to sign the accounts and it be noted that if any material changes to the accounts are required, then an additional committee meeting would be convened to consider the changes.

- (2) That it be agreed that the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee (or Vice Chair in their absence), can make any further changes to the letters of representation that may arise during completion of the audit.

62 **Treasury Management Report - Q3 2020-21**

The Director of Finance submitted a report providing information on treasury management performance and compliance with treasury management policy for 2020-21 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the Quarter 3 2020/21 Treasury Management Report be noted.

63 **Changes to Accounts, Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference**

The Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer submitted a report which recommended changes to the Terms of Reference for the Accounts, Audit & Risk Committee.

The Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer informed Members that the proposed Terms of Reference extended the areas that would be reported to the Committee and confirmed that the amendments were aligned to current best practise and based on the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) model template.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the new Terms of Reference for Audit & Risk Committee, as set out in the annex to the Minutes (as set out on the Minutes Book) be endorsed and recommended to full Council for approval.

64 **Draft Annual Report of Accounts, Audit and Risk**

The Director of Finance submitted a report which presented the draft report of the Accounts, Audit & Risk Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft Annual Report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee be endorsed and it be agreed that the Director of Finance,

in consultation with the Chair of the Committee (or Deputy Chair in their absence), can make any further amendments and finalise the Annual Report of the Accounts Audit and Risk Committee for presentation at full Council

65 **Work Programme**

The Assistant Director of Finance gave an overview of the indicative work programme for the 2021/2022 municipal year.

Resolved

- (1) That the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.40 pm

Chairman:

Date: