

Cherwell District Council

Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 17 July 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Nick Cotter (Chairman)
Councillor David Rogers (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Besmira Brasha
Councillor Jean Conway
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Dom Vaitkus
Harry Lawson, Independent Person (no voting rights)

Substitute Members:

Councillor John Broad (In place of Councillor Ian Middleton)
Councillor Rob Pattenden (In place of Councillor Alisa Russell)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Alisa Russell
Sarah Thompson, Independent Person (no voting rights)

Also Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources
Jonathan Dodsworth, Internal Audit, Veritau

Officers:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

19 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29 May 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman reminded the Committee that Treasury Management training facilitated by the Council' treasury advisors would take place at the conclusion of the meeting.

21 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

22 **Counter Fraud Work Programme 2024/25**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report which presented the programme of counter work to be undertaken in 2024/25, and asked the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee to note this programme.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the 2024/25 counter fraud work programme be approved.

23 **Risk Monitoring Report End of Year 2023 - 2024**

The Assistant Director Customer Focus submitted a report to update the Committee on how well the council was managing its Strategic Risks, as part of our duty to remain compliant, and to be able to identify any improvements required. The report presented the risk monitoring report for the end of the financial year 2023-2024.

In considering the report, Members commented that the potential impact of "Elements of the COVID-19 response and recovery work may be compromised, delayed or not taken forwards" under risk L12 – Corporate Governance was no longer relevant and should be removed from the risk register.

In response to Members highlighting as a risk the potential cost to Cherwell District Council in relation to planning developments and delays in the transfer of assets to Town/Parish councils resulting in non-acceptance of assets and the potential future risk of the closure of Church of England graveyards and transfer of responsibility for maintenance to Town/Parish Councils via Cherwell District Council, the Performance Team Leader that work was underway to review risks and she would check with the relevant lead officer if these would be strategic or service risks for future monitoring.

In terms of general comments about the Risk Register, the Committee agreed to suggest to the Executive the inclusion of information about how risks can be added to the risk register and to consider improvements to the format and presentation of the Risk Register.

Resolved

- (1) That the Risk Monitoring Report for end of year 2023-24 be noted.
- (2) That, having given due consideration to the Council's current Risk Management Strategy 2023/24, the following comments and suggestions be made to Executive for consideration to be incorporated in the Risk Management Policy 2024/25:
 - Inclusion of information about how risks can be added to the risk register
 - Improvements to the format / presentation of the Risk Register
 - Remove from the risk register potential impact of "Elements of the COVID-19 response and recovery work may be compromised, delayed or not taken forwards" under risk L12 – Corporate Governance
 - Include in the risk register the potential cost to Cherwell District Council in relation to planning developments and delays in the transfer of assets to Town/Parish councils resulting in non-acceptance of assets
 - Potential future risk of the closure of Church of England graveyards and transfer of responsibility for maintenance to Town/Parish Councils via Cherwell District Council

24

Draft Statement of Accounts 2023-2024

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to provide an opportunity for review of the draft 2023/24 Statement of Accounts which were published on the council's website on 31 May 2024.

Resolved

- (1) That the report and publication of the draft statement of accounts 2023/24 be noted.

25

Treasury Management Report - Q1 2024/25 (June 2023)

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to provide information on treasury management performance and compliance with treasury management policy for 2024-25 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice. The report demonstrated that all treasury management activities undertaken during the first quarter of 2024-25 complied with the CIPFA Code of Practice and the council's approved Treasury Management Strategy.

Resolved

- (1) That the Treasury Management Performance Report for Quarter 1 2024/2025 be noted.

26 **Support to Subsidiaries**

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) to inform the Committee of the overall level of support provided to the council's subsidiaries and how this is considered as part of the external audit.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that there was an exempt appendix to the report and any questions on the exempt appendix would be taken in private session.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the report be noted.

27 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

Resolved

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraph 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

28 **Support to Subsidiaries - Exempt Appendix**

The Committee considered the exempt appendix to the report on Support to Subsidiaries.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the exempt appendix be noted.

29 **Readmittance of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

30 **Work Programme**

The Head of Finance provided an update on the Committee's work programme.

Resolved

(1) That the work programme update be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.32 pm

Chairman:

Date: