

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, OX15 4AA, on 27 September 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Lynn Pratt (Chairman)
Councillor Besmira Brasha
Councillor Donna Ford
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Ian Middleton
Harry Lawson (Independent Person – no voting rights)
Sarah Thompson (Independent Person – no voting rights)

Substitute Members:

Councillor Mark Cherry (In place of Councillor Andrew Crichton)
Councillor Adam Nell (In place of Councillor Simon Holland)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Simon Holland
Councillor Andrew Crichton

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council
Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Alison Kennett, Audit Manager UKI Assurance

Officers:

Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Alex Rycroft, Strategic Finance Business Partner
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
David Rogers, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader
Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor
Katherine Kitashima, Audit Manager (internal Audit)

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

25 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 July 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman announced that a Treasury Management training session would be held after the Committee meeting.

27 **Statement of Accounts 2021/22**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report that updated Members on the draft statement of accounts for 2021/22, the draft audit results report of the external auditors and a draft letter of representation.

In introducing the report, the Head of Finance explained that there were six technical changes to the statement of accounts between the draft published in July 2022 and the version presented to the Committee. The Head of Finance updated the Committee on figures in the consolidated income and expenditure statement and balance sheet.

The Committee was advised that the external audit was not yet complete, but no further material changes to the statement were anticipated and therefore delegation to sign off the Statement of Accounts 2021/22 at the appropriate time was sought.

In response to questions regarding Castle Quay, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Nell, clarified the accounting position highlighting that the Committee was considering the draft accounts for 2021/22 and it was appropriate to focus on the values for that year rather than previous years. The accounts had been produced in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Practice. The Portfolio Holder for Finance added that this committee received quarterly reports on levels of debt. Budget Planning Committee and Executive received regular reports on the in-year budget position.

The Committee thanked and commended Finance Officers for their hard work producing the Statement of Accounts 2021/22.

Resolved

- (1) That the revised Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) (annex to the minutes as set out in the minute book) and Balance Sheet (annex to the minutes as set out in the minute book) in comparison to the published Draft Statement of Accounts 2021/22 (annex to the minutes as set out in the minute book) be noted and the documents be endorsed along with necessary changes to supporting statements and notes.
- (2) That it be agreed that, once the final audit opinion is received, the Assistant 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 make any further material changes to the accounts agreed with the auditors and sign the accounts.
- (3) That it be agreed that the Assistant Director of Finance, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee (or Deputy Chair in their absence), can make any further changes to the letters of representation agreed with the auditors that may arise during completion of the audit.

28 **External Audit update**

The External Auditor provided a verbal update. Fieldwork was ongoing and a formal consultation with Finance officers was needed for each adjustment. The significant risks identified in the planning report remained the same.

The External Auditor advised the Committee that it was anticipated that the audit would be completed in late October. In light of the delegation to sign off the Statement of Accounts 2021/22 agreed under the previous agenda item, the External Auditor explained that she would send the external audit results to Committee members and, subject to the majority of Committee members responding they were satisfied, the delegation to sign off could be fulfilled.

Resolved

- (1) That the verbal update be noted.

29 **Internal Audit Progress Report 2023/24**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report that updated the committee on Internal Audit progress for 2023/24.

In introducing the report, the Chief Internal Auditor advised that two audits had now been completed: Community Development Projects and Climate, both with overall conclusions of Amber. There were three audits currently being undertaken and the remaining three were planned for later in the year.

Resolved

- (1) That the Internal Audit Progress Report 2023/24 be noted.

30 **Risk Monitoring Report July 2023**

The Assistant Director - Customer Focus submitted a report that updated the Committee on how well the Council was managing its Strategic Risks.

Resolved

- (1) That the Risk Monitoring Report for July 2023 be noted.

31 **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report 2022/23**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report which provided Committee with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report on Cherwell District Council for the financial year 2022/23.

Resolved

- (1) That the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report 2022/23 be noted.

32 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

33 **Work Programme**

The Head of Finance updated the Committee on the Work Programme.

Resolved

- (1) That the Work Programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.12 pm

Chairman:

Date: