

ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

14TH MARCH 2023

PRESENT

Councillors: Brotherton, (Chair), Lloyd (Vice-Chair), Carter, Ennis, Hassan, Thompson

In attendance

Karen Murray	External Auditor, Mazars
Graeme Bentley	Director of Finance and Systems
Dave Muggeridge	Head of Financial Management
Mark Foster	Audit and Assurance Manager
Frank Fallon	Finance Manager
Nikki Royle	Strategic Finance Manager
James Parry	Lawyer
Jeannie Platt	Independent Member
Stephanie Ferraioli	Governance Officer

1 ATTENDANCES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Morgan, Whetton and Whitham.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There was no declaration of interest to be disclosed.

3. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No question from members of the public were received.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 1st February 2023 be noted as a true and correct record.

5. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER – 2022/23 (MARCH 2023 UPDATE)

This latest update of the Strategic Risk Register highlights 16 risks on the register. One of the risks, relating to the impact of statutory changes within Adults and Children's Services, has been revised to reflect risks in relation to the impact of external inspections of those areas.

There was discussion regards the strategic risk relating to information governance. Legal Services provided an update to the Committee regards plans and actions being taken to improve performance and future strategic risk updates will reflect this.

Councillor Carter raised a query regards mandatory training in relation to information governance and was advised that a 95% completion target was in place. The fact that the training must be completed every 12 months results in the expiry of training completion for certain staff and it is therefore not practical that 100% completion would be reported.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

6. ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY

The Committee received a report setting out the Council's revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, Policy and supporting guidance. Supporting the Strategy are a number of policies and guidance including the Anti-Money Laundering Policy and Procedures which were reviewed and updated during 2022/23.

It notes a number of policies and guidance that are not all included in the report here but do support the overall strategy will be subject to future review which include prosecution and procedures to recover money due.

In discussions, it was noted there are delays in criminal proceedings due to a shortage of staff at the Magistrates although recruitment is ongoing

Further to a query raised by Councillor Carter regards recovering money due, Legal Services advised that through due diligence and appropriate response from investigating officers, monies due can be recovered and associated policies supporting this were subject to future review.

RESOLVED – That the Committee approve the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy.

7. AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The External Auditor presented a brief update informing Committee Members that the 2021/22 audit was ongoing. There is currently nothing coming out of the audit that the Committee should be concerned about. They have also started working with Trafford Council's Finance team on the 2022/23 audit.

The Auditor highlighted that the second part of the report refers to relevant documentation that Members may find useful reading given their role within the Council.

Councillor Carter was concerned that the team was falling behind schedule but was reassured that the delays relate to sector-wide accounting issues and delays are being experienced across the country because of this.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

8. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2022/23: PERIOD 10 (APRIL 2022 – JANUARY 2023)

The Director of Finance and Systems presented the latest budget monitoring report reported to the Executive on 13/3/23. The approved budget for 2022/23 agreed at the 16 February 2022 Council meeting was £192.57m. The current projected forecast outturn is an adverse £29k comprising an underspend on the controllable Service budgets of £5.943m plus an overspend caused by factors outside the Council's control, mainly associated with the high levels of inflation of £5.972m.

Councillor Carter requested an explanation of the MRP and this was given by the Director of Finance and Systems.

Councillor Thompson asked what re-profiling meant regards some rephasings on specific capital schemes. She was told that it is difficult to profile right when a set capital programme is intended to be delivered over a number of years, so it will necessitate reprofiling over the years.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

9. 2022/23 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT: APPROACH/TIMETABLE

The Audit and Assurance Manager presented a report setting out the approach for producing the 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement (AGS), on behalf of the Legal and Governance Director. It was noted that the draft AGS will be presented to Members for review at the next meeting.

Regulations requires that each year we review governance arrangements and report on the effectiveness of these through the AGS. This process is coordinated by Legal

and Governance but requires input from officers across the Council. The Committee will be able to comment before the document is finalised by the end of September 2023 which will be in line with accounts deadlines.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

10. AUDIT AND ASSURANCE SERVICE – INTERNAL AUDIT OPERATIONAL PLAN 2023/24

The Audit and Assurance Manager presented the internal audit plan for 2023/24 which had been agreed by CLT; Internal Audit operates in accordance with its Charter and Strategy which are included in the report for information and are unchanged from last year.

The plan covers audit resources, areas to be covered and performance monitoring. Updates will be provided through the year regards progress against the plan.

The Plan covers various categories of activity e.g. procurement, anti-fraud work, reviews in relation to schools with estimated time planned. It is acknowledged that required time can be variable as at this stage not all required work will be known eg issues arising through the year, Audit being advised through the year of work in relation to grant checks etc.

RESOLVED - That the 2023/24 internal operational plan be approved.

11. ACCOUNTING CONCEPTS AND POLICIES

The Strategic Finance Manager highlighted the details of policies and concept to compile accounts for 2022/23 and how assets are managed and requested the Committee to approve the report presented today. The Strategic Finance Manager responded to some points of clarification from Cllrs.

RESOLVED – That the report be approved.

12 ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – WORK PROGRAMME – 2022/23

The Audit and Assurance Manager informed Members that the annual report for the work carried out through 2022/23 will be produced and then shared at the next Accounts and Audit Committee meeting before being taken to Council.

He also reminded Members that this was the last meeting of the municipal year and that most planned areas have been covered by the Committee throughout the current year with other items to be considered for inclusion in 2023/24.

13 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to be discussed.

14 EXCLUSION RESOLUTION

There were no items to be considered under the Exclusion Resolution.

Meeting ends: 19.34 pm