

ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

20 MARCH 2013

PRESENT

Councillor M. Whetton (in the Chair).

Councillors Mrs. L. Evans (Vice-Chairman), J. Baugh, C. Boyes, B Brotherton, P. Lally and T. Ross.

In attendance

Director of Finance (Mr. I. Duncan),
Head of Partnerships and Performance (Ms. J. Stephenson),
Head of Workforce and Core Strategy (Ms. L. Hooley),
Audit and Assurance Manager (Mr. M. Foster),
Principal Audit and Assurance Team Leader (Mr. J. Miller),
Democratic Services Officer (Mr. I. Cockill).

Also in attendance: Mr. M. Waite, Grant Thornton UK LLP.

38. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

39. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Performance and Partnerships providing an overview of the Trafford Partnership since the Comprehensive Area Assessment in 2009. The presentation provided Members with a number of case studies to showcase Partnership activity and to demonstrate how, working with other local organisations, the Council had created the conditions for success. The Committee was also informed that Trafford Partnership had recently been awarded the 'Public Sector Partnership' award for 2013 by the Local Government Chronicle.

The Committee recognised that there was a need to increase awareness of the Partnership's structure and its accountability, particularly locality boards and noted that it was an issue the service was hoping to explore with Members and work upon to improve. In general, Member engagement was an issue for the Committee as Members sought to identify the ways in which they could get involved.

RESOLVED: That the accomplishments of Trafford Partnership be noted and that the Head of Performance and Partnerships be thanked for an informative presentation.

40. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2011/12 - GOVERNANCE ISSUE UPDATE: WORKFORCE PLANNING

Further to the control issues identified in the 2011/12 Annual Governance Statement, the Director of Human Resources submitted a progress report in

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delivering improvements and continuing to develop the agenda around workforce planning, leadership, management and workforce development.

The Committee sought clarification over the reporting arrangements for the Employee Survey and the results compared to the previous survey. The Head of Workforce and Core Strategy reported that workshops would help to verify issues identified in the survey. Furthermore, it was recognised that the results and any actions to be taken in response would need to be communicated.

RESOLVED: That the report and progress to date be noted.

41. CERTIFICATION WORK REPORT 2011/12

The Council's External Auditor, Grant Thornton, submitted a report summarising its overall assessment of the Council's management arrangements in respect of the certification process and highlighting a number of matters in relation to individual claims. The report also summarised the key messages from the review.

In respect of the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Claim, the Director of Finance advised the Committee that procedures had been reviewed and a number of training needs had been identified. The District Auditor also assured Members that it was not unusual for Councils to encounter reporting issues for this type of claim.

RESOLVED: That the report and the agreed recommendations to address the key messages of the review be noted.

42. AUDIT PLAN 2012/13

The Council's external auditor, Grant Thornton, submitted the Audit Plan for Trafford Council for the year ended 31 March 2013 which outlined its audit strategy and plan to deliver the audit.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the external auditor's 2012/13 Audit Plan for the Council be noted.
- (2) That, considering the results of interim audit work, the Committee is encouraged by conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the internal audit service.

43. AUDIT AND ASSURANCE SERVICE - INTERNAL AUDIT OPERATIONAL PLAN 2013/14

The Audit and Assurance Manager submitted a report providing, at a high level, the proposed Internal Audit Operational Plan which identified the work to be undertaken by the service during the year. The report described the Plan's method of compilation and the factors taken into account, including statutory obligations and the objectives of the Council.

RESOLVED: That the 2013/14 Internal Audit Operational Plan be approved.

44. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER - 2012/13 QUARTER 4

The Audit and Assurance Manager submitted a report providing an update on the strategic risk environment for quarter four, 2012/13, including the arrangements in place to manage each of the strategic risks.

The report highlighted changes since the last update to Committee on 26 September 2012 (Minute No. 18 refers), including the addition of a further risk relating to the implementation of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme.

In discussion of the risk register, Members indicated that a shortage of secondary school places had been identified nationally. The Committee was assured by the Audit and Assurance Manager that this would be monitored as part of the existing risk regarding the demand for both primary and secondary school places.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the updated Strategic Risk Register be noted.
- (2) That, in light of the recently publicised issue of a future national shortage of school places, any potential risk of exposure be reflected in future analysis of the strategic risk environment.

45. RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENT AND STRATEGY

The Audit and Assurance Manager submitted a report providing the updated Risk Management Policy Statement and Strategy for review and approval. The report also highlighted work underway or planned to ensure adequate processes and supporting guidance on risk management were in place across the Authority.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Council's updated Risk Management Policy Statement and Strategy be approved.
- (2) That the Committee notes that updated guidance supporting the Risk Management Strategy will be publicised across the Council.

46. ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION UPDATE

The Audit and Assurance Manager submitted a report providing an update on actions underway and planned to support the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

47. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT

The Audit and Assurance Manager submitted a report providing the Committee with details of the annual review of the effectiveness of the Council's internal audit

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function, as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011. The report also included information in respect of the new Public Sector Internal Audit Standards to be introduced from 1 April 2013.

RESOLVED: That, on the basis of the evidence provided, the Committee supports the conclusion that Trafford Council continues to operate adequate and effective arrangements for Internal Audit.

48. ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME - 2012/13

The Audit and Assurance Manager submitted a report outlining the work of the Committee over the past Municipal Year. The work programme had been flexible and as well as covering all the items planned at the start of the year, other items had been added through the year.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the 2012/13 work programme be noted.
- (2) That the Committee also notes that its Annual Report and proposed work plan for 2013/14 will be considered at the next meeting.

49. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since it was the last meeting of the Municipal Year, the Chairman thanked Members and officers for their valued input throughout the year. Having regard to the work they had covered, Members joined with the Chairman to express appreciation for the manner in which complex matters had been presented.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and finished at 8.59 p.m.