

## **ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**20 NOVEMBER 2013**

### **PRESENT**

Councillor M. Whetton (in the Chair).

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

#### In attendance:

Director of Finance (Mr. I. Duncan),

Head of Partnerships and Performance (Ms. J. Stephenson),

Audit and Assurance Manager (Mr. M. Foster),

Records and Information Systems Manager (Ms. P. Titterington),

Transformation Programme Manager (Ms. S. Maynard),

Principal Audit and Assurance Team Leader (Ms. H. Carnson),

Democratic Services Officer (Mr. I. Cockill).

Also in attendance: Mr. M. Waite and Ms. H. Stevenson, Grant Thornton UK LLP.

### **22. MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **23. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2012/13 - UPDATE ON SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUE: RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

The Records and Information Systems Manager submitted a report providing an update on the implementation of an Electronic Document and Records Management solution, one of the significant governance issues identified in the 2012/13 Annual Governance Statement for further development through 2013/14.

Expanding on the report, further clarification was provided to Members of the Committee regarding the original specification for the solution, the programme's budget, the digitalisation of historic and newly arising documentation, including an audit trail of changes and the estimated timescale for delivery of the project.

RESOLVED: That the report and update be noted.

### **24. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2012/13 - UPDATE ON SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUE: LOCALITY PARTNERSHIPS**

The Head of Partnerships and Performance submitted a report providing an update on the development of Locality Partnerships, one of the significant governance issues identified in the 2012/13 Annual Governance Statement for further development through 2013/14.

The Committee welcomed the introduction of four Locality Boards to engage the community and advocated more communication with local elected members, including a formal reporting process to the Council. Members also recognised the importance of retaining Community Ambassadors long-term.

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The Council's External Auditor commented that the principals of Locality Partnerships and working in collaboration were encouraging and if successfully incorporated with the Council's objectives, plans and strategies, could ultimately be viewed as good practice.

RESOLVED: That the update and development work to date be noted.

**25. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME PRESENTATION**

The Committee received a presentation from the Transformation Programme Manager outlining the key responsibilities of the Transformation Team and its funding arrangements. Members received details of the team's outputs and outcomes from 2012/13, planned activity for 2013/14 and potential future challenges.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted and a further update on the Transformation Programme be submitted to the Committee in due course.

**26. UPDATE ON PAYROLL ISSUE RAISED IN THE 2012/13 EXTERNAL AUDIT FINDINGS REPORT**

The Director of Human Resources submitted a report providing an update on the Council's response to the External Auditor's recommendation in relation to payroll documentation, contained in the 2012/13 Audit Findings Report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

**27. THE ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER FOR TRAFFORD COUNCIL - YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2013**

The Committee received the Council's Annual Audit Letter for the year ended 31 March 2013, summarising the key findings arising from the work of the External Auditor, Grant Thornton.

Mick Waite, Engagement Lead, Grant Thornton reaffirmed a key message from the letter that whilst the Council has a good, disciplined and structured approach to managing its financial performance, there were still significant challenges ahead which would require further transformation to achieve savings while securing high quality services.

RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the key messages and audit conclusions, including the key areas for Council attention.

**28. AUDIT COMMITTEE UPDATE**

Members received a report from Grant Thornton UK LLP on the progress at November 2013, in delivering its responsibilities as the Authority's external auditor.

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The report also provided a summary of emerging national issues and developments relevant to the Council and included a number of challenge questions in respect of the emerging issues.

RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the report and recognises that the risks associated with Business Rate collection, formerly the responsibility of the government, are now a real issue for the Council.

**29. TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2013-14 MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Executive Member for Finance and the Director of Finance submitted a joint report providing an update on the progress of the treasury management activities undertaken for the first half of 2013/14.

The Committee noted that the Council's current banking services contract, which was due to expire on 31 March 2014, had been extended by a further 12 months and the Director of Finance outlined plans for a joint bank tendering exercise with other Greater Manchester Councils.

RESOLVED: That the Treasury Management activities undertaken in the first half of 2013/14 be noted.

**30. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2013/14 - PERIOD 6 (APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2013)**

The Committee received, for information, a joint report of the Executive Member for Finance and Director of Finance detailing the outcomes of the monitoring of the Council's revenue budget for the first six months of the financial year which was presented to the Executive on 18 November 2013.

RESOLVED: That the revenue budget monitoring information for the period April to September 2013, be noted.

**31. AUDIT AND ASSURANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2013**

The Audit and Assurance Manager submitted a report providing a summary of the work of Audit and Assurance during the period July to September 2013 and providing ongoing assurance to the Council on the adequacy of its control environment.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

**32. ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME - 2013/14**

The Audit and Assurance Manager submitted a report setting out the updated work plan for the Committee for the 2013/14 Municipal Year and outlining the areas to be considered at each of its meetings. Further to the report, the Committee was advised of an additional matter for the February 2014 meeting, regarding a risk based verification policy for Housing and Council Tax Benefits.

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RESOLVED: That the 2013/14 work programme, with the inclusion of the Benefits Risk Based Verification Policy, be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and finished at 8.19 p.m.