

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

Monday, 15 March 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Sultan Ali (in the Chair); Councillors Ali Ahmed, Gartside, Hussain, Martin, Rashid and D. Williams

OFFICERS: J. Murphy (Chief Finance Officer), S. Smith (Deputy Chief Finance Officer), S. Knowles (Head of Internal Audit), M. Nixon (Risk and Insurance Manager) and M. Garraway (Committee and Constitutional Services).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Ms. J. Sanderson (Independent Member); Mr. C. Ainsworth (Independent Person) and Ms. K. Murphy (Mazars).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Malcolm

27 MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee held 22nd December 2020 be approved as a correct record.

28 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR RESOLVED

That Councillor Sultan Ali be appointed as the Chair for the duration of the meeting.

29 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER

The Committee considered the Annual Audit Letter from Mazars. The Letter arose from the work that had been carried out at Rochdale Borough Council ('the Council') for the year ended 31 March 2020.

The Letter was intended to communicate key messages to the Council and external stakeholders, including members of the public. The annual work programme, which included nationally prescribed and locally determined work, had been undertaken in accordance with the Audit Plan that issued on 29 April 2015 and was conducted in accordance with the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice, International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) and other guidance issued by the Audit Commission and Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Limited.

RESOLVED

That the Annual Audit Letter for the Council be noted.

30 AUDIT STRATEGY MEMORANDUM

The Council's external auditors submitted their Audit Strategy Memorandum for the year ending 2021 for consideration by the Committee.

In presenting the report, Members were advised on key factors including:

- The scope of the audit and respective responsibilities of the Council and auditors;
- Materiality thresholds in relation to the Council's financial statements, including financial parameters for reporting minor errors to the Committee and the value which would require the auditors to issue a qualified opinion on the accounts;
- Areas of risk, which were noted as being common to all local authorities;
- The approach to value for money with particularly focus on Health and social care integration and financial pressures

Members of the Committee raised questions and sought assurance on the management response to areas raised as concerns and detailed within section 5 of the submitted report.

RESOLVED

That the External Audit Strategy Memorandum be noted.

31 INTERNAL AUDIT QUARTER 3 REPORT- 2020/2021

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Internal Audit summarising the work of the Internal Audit team during the third quarter of 2020/21. Internal Audit was able to provide either substantial or adequate assurance over the effectiveness of risk management in all the audits completed during the period. Furthermore, Internal Audit has completed 64% of the agreed Audit Plan which achieves the agreed target.

The impact of the pandemic has meant that, following discussions with senior management in relevant Directorates, amendments have been proposed to the Audit Plan. Some audits have been deferred until 2021/22 and other audits being introduced.

Resolved

That the report be noted

32 RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRESS REPORT - QUARTER THREE - 2020/2021

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Risk summarising Risk Management and Insurance work during Quarter 3 of 2020/21.

Reviews of the corporate risk registers managed by both the Council and the Heywood Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) had been completed. The safeguarding risk to vulnerable children managed by the Children's Services directorate had been assessed to have increased due to the Covid-19 restrictions. There has been no relaxation in expectations of close contact or the audit of case files during the pandemic as social care services continue to mitigate these barriers. Matters relating to ICT Services were reported.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

- 33 LOCAL AUTHORITY CONSTITUTION - CHANNEL DUTY GUIDANCE 2020**
Consideration was given to a report of the Monitoring Officer informing Audit and Governance Committee of amendments to the Council's Constitution taken under delegation.

RESOLVED

That the decision of the Monitoring Officer to update the list of Statutory and Proper Officers in the Constitution to record the designation of the Director of Children's Services as the Council's strategic safeguarding responsibility for Prevent and Channel, be noted.

- 34 VOTE OF THANKS**
Members of the Committee express their thanks to the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee Councillor Malcolm for the services provided to the Committee.