
Minutes of the meeting of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Monday, 17 September 2018**Present:****Members:**

Councillor G Butland	substitute for Councillor Dr Moore
Councillor P Channer	
Councillor T Cutmore	Chairman
Councillor A Davies	
Councillor A Erskine	
Councillor C Guglielmi	substitute for Councillor Mitchell
Councillor M Maddocks	substitute for Councillor Platt
Councillor K Smith	
Councillor A Turrell	

Also Present:

Janine Combrinck	Director and representative of BDO (external auditors)
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ECC Officers:

Georgia Chimbani	Director of Local Delivery
Paula Clowes	Head of Assurance
Christine Golding	Chief Accountant
Andy Gribben	Senior Democratic Services Officer (clerk to the meeting)
Chris Martin	Director, of Strategic Commissioning and Policy
Paul Turner	Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting members of the committee, officers in attendance, the representative from the external auditors and members of the public to the meeting.

He reminded members that the meeting was being broadcast live over the internet and that the full discussion would be publicly available on the County Council's website after the meeting.

2. Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest.

The report of Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received, and it was noted that:

1. The membership of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee was as shown in the report.

2. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Hedley, Mitchell, Moore and Platt. Councillors Butland, Guglielmi and Maddocks attended as substitutes.
3. Councillor Butland declared a Code Interest as a non-remunerated Director of North Essex Garden Communities as referred to in the Audit Annual Report. The Chairman reminded members that any interests must be declared during the meeting if the need to do so arose.

3 Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to a correction being made to show that Councillor Channer had conveyed her apologies.

There were no matters arising.

4 Annual Audit Letter – Year ending 31 March 2018

Members received a report (AGS/20/18 and appendix) from Margaret Lee, Executive Director for Corporate and Customer Services, the External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter for the year ending 31 March 2018 presented by Christine Golding, Chief Accountant.

The report informed members of the detailed findings from the audit work performed by the external auditors Ernst and Young in relation to the financial year 2017/18 which were reported to the Committee on 30 July 2018.

Members were informed that the Annual Audit Letter, which will be published on the Council's website, contained no new information but provided a roundup of the key issues already reported upon by Ernst and Young in relation to their 2017/18 audit and draws the 2017/18 audit to an end.

Resolved:

That the report be noted

5 Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Progress Report

Members received the Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Progress Report (AGS/21/18 and appendices 1, 2 and 3) from Paula Clowes, Head of Assurance.

Members noted that there was one 'No Assurance' report, ten reports of 'Limited Assurance' as well as five 'Critical' and seven 'Major' recommendations that had moved beyond their agreed due date. There was also a Counter Fraud update.

The 'No Assurance' report related to the Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust. (EPUT) an audit of which was carried out at the request of the Director, Adult Social Care following concerns about the effectiveness and working practices of the Partnership arrangement with EPUT.

Members were advised that three critical issues had been identified and they received further details from Chris Martin, Director of Strategic Commissioning and Policy and Georgia Chimbani, Director of Local Delivery. The committee requested that an update on these matters be brought back to the meeting to its meeting scheduled for 3 June 2019.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

6 Declarations of Interest

Members received a report (AGS/22/18) from Paul Turner, Director, Legal and Assurance, a noting the results of a recent all-member consultation and seeking approval to make a recommendation to Council to amend the Code of Conduct for Members.

Members were advised that, overall, members were broadly in favour of the proposal but it was not supported by some members and the Leader of the Labour Group.

Councillor Butland offered to take to a future meeting of the Essex Leaders and Chief Executives a proposal that the Monitoring Officers in Essex work towards an alignment of their individual Codes of Members Conduct. This was generally supported by members of the committee.

Resolved:

That the Committee recommend to Council that paragraphs 24.8.3 and 24.8.4 of the Code of Conduct for Members be amended to read as follows and that paragraph 24.8.4 of the Constitution becomes 24.8.5:

24.8.3 In addition you must withdraw from the room during the consideration of an item of business and must not participate in any debate or vote on that item of business if:

*(a) you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** in that business; or*

*(b) you have a **Code interest** which is one that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest.*

24.8.4 Paragraph 24.8.3 does not apply where:

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- (a) *A member has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer or the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee; or*
- (b) *A meeting is operating to a procedure which would permit a member of the public to address the committee whether on the invitation of the Chairman or otherwise, but this exemption only applies for as long as the Member is either addressing the committee or answering questions asked by any member of the committee.*

7 Work Programme

Members received the AGS Work Programme (AGS/23/18) from Paul Turner, Director, Legal and Assurance

The draft programme of work, which was requested by the Committee at its meeting in June, was the first such programme for the committee in its new guise as the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee. Members were advised that the programme would be flexible in order to address any matters which might arise.

8 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the committee was scheduled to be on Monday 10 December 2018 at 10.00am in Committee Room 1

The meeting closed at 11.48am.

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Chairman
10 December 2018