

Minutes of the meeting of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee, held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Monday, 29 July 2019

Present:

Members:

Councillor T Cutmore	Chairman
Councillor A Davies	
Councillor A Hedley	
Councillor M Maddocks	(substitute for Councillor Channer)
Councillor R Mitchell	
Councillor Dr R Moore	
Councillor M Platt	
Councillor A Turrell	

Also Present:

Barry Pryke	BDO LLP (external auditor)
Janine Combrinck	BDO LLP (external auditor)
David Eagles	BDO LLP (external auditor)

ECC Officers:

Sam Andrews	Investment Manager, Essex Pension Fund
Paula Clowes	Head of Assurance
Fiona Davis	Director, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance (Adults)
Christine Golding	Chief Accountant
Giles Goodeve	Service Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Andy Gribben	Senior Democratic Services Officer (clerk to the meeting)
Sarah Harris	Strategic Internal Audit Manager, Internal Audit and Counter Fraud
Margaret Lee	Executive Director, Corporate and Customer Services
Paul Turner	Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)
John Tyreman	Director, Technology Services

1 Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman welcomed members of the committee, officers in attendance, the representative from the Essex Pension Fund and from BDO LLP, the external auditor.

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. He also announced the fire, health and safety information.

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 Councillor Channer who was substituted by Councillor Maddocks, and Councillor Erskine.
3. With respect to items on the agenda:
 - Councillors Hedley and Platt mentioned in respect of item 4 that they were members of the Essex Pension Fund Strategy Board,
 - Councillor Davies mentioned in respect of item 4 that he would in future be entitled to receive an LGPS Pension and
 - Councillor Maddocks mentioned in respect of item 4 that he was in receipt of an Essex Pension.

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 3 June 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Update on Internal Audit Recommendations

The committee received a report (AGS/37/19 and confidential appendix) and a presentation from John Tyreman, Director, Technology Services Essex County Council relating to outstanding audit actions relating to Technology Services.

Members were informed of actions that had been taken to identify and mitigate the risks identified by the audit and to what specific risks the Council was exposed, in particular in relation to disaster recovery.

Members also noted the confidential information provided as an appendix to the report and determined that there was no need to enter private session in order to discuss those matters further.

Resolved:

1. Agreed that the Committee was content with the progress towards the implementation of internal audit recommendations.
2. Requested that the Director, Technology Services attend a further meeting of the Committee in approximately six months in order to report further progress.

5 Update on Implementation of Internal Audit Recommendations

The committee received an oral update from Fiona Davis, Director and Giles Goodeve, Service Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Essex County Council.

Members were given the context for the audit that had been undertaken and informed of the legislative framework that enabled adults to be deprived of their liberty in hospitals and care homes when the person lacks the relevant capacity.

The legislation placed specific responsibilities on the local authority as the supervisory body as it must arrange for assessment to be undertaken and complete the process for authorisation. There had been a significant increase in the number of requests for assessment.

Members were informed that, arising from the Internal Audit there had been three recommendations with management actions and whilst these were either completed or on track, regrettably these updates had not been uploaded on to the 'Team Central' system to inform the Internal Audit service. In consequence it appeared as if the internal audit recommendations had not been addressed. Since the identification of that weakness they had developed a more robust system.

Resolved:

1. The Committee were satisfied that sufficient progress was being made against the Internal Audit recommendations
2. The Committee requested that the Chairman of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee consider if the Safeguarding Service was sufficiently resourced to meet the demands being laid upon it.

6 To Approve the Statement of Accounts 2018/2019 and the Annual Governance Statement

The committee received a report (AGS/38/19 and appendix) from Margaret Lee, Executive Director for Corporate and Customer Services and presented by Christine Golding, Chief Accountant and also noted the addendum and narrative changes to the accounts.

Resolved

1. Noted the matters raised in the External Auditor's 'Audit Completion Reports' (*item 6 on the Agenda*)
2. Approved the draft of the 2018/19 Annual Governance Statement, which was included in the Statement of Accounts document (*pages 203 to 224 of Appendix A to the report*); and
3. Approved the updated draft of the 2018/19 Statement of Accounts (*attached as Appendix A to the report*);
4. Noted the representations that the Executive Director for Corporate and Customer Services and Chairman of the Committee made on behalf of the Council and the Essex Pension Fund (*as set out within the Letters of Representation appended to the Audit Completion Reports for the Council and the Essex Pension Fund, which were presented elsewhere on the Agenda*).

The Chairman added that he and the members were grateful to Margaret Lee, who was stepping down as the Council's 151 Officer and had contributed significantly to the work of the committee.

7 To receive the 2018/2019 Audit Completion Report for Essex County Council

The committee received a report (AGS/39/19 and appendix) from Margaret Lee, Executive Director for Corporate and Customer Services and Christine Golding, Chief Accountant

Resolved

The report was noted

8 To receive the 2018/2019 Audit Completion Report for the Essex Pension Fund

The committee received a report (AGS/39/19 and appendix) from Margaret Lee, Executive Director for Corporate and Customer Services

Resolved

The report was noted

9 Work Programme

The members of the committee received a report (AGS/41/19) from Paul Turner, Director, Legal and Assurance

The committee noted that the Work Programme was subject to regular updates and the Chairman encouraged members to suggest any matter to be included in the programme.

It was noted that an addition to the programme was to be an update at the meeting in March 2020 from John Tyreman, Director, Technology Services Essex County Council relating to progress by Technology Services towards fulfilling their actions arising from the Internal Audit Recommendations.

12 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the committee was scheduled to take place on Monday 16 September 2019 at 10.00am in Committee Room 1

13 Exclusion of Press and public

Resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that consideration of the report involved the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within paragraph 7 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

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Chairman
16 September 2019