

MINUTES of a meeting of the AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE held in the Abbey Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on WEDNESDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2024

Present: Councillor P Moulton (Chair)

Councillors D Everitt, A Barker, R Boam, D Cooper, R Johnson, G Rogers, J G Simmons, N Smith and R Sutton

Officers: Ms K Beavis, Mrs A Crouch, Ms K Hiller, Mr T Devonshire, Ms A Morgan and Ms B Leonard

External Audit: Ms H Parks

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

25. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

26. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings held on 25 September 2024.

It was moved by Councillor R Johnson, seconded by Councillor N Smith, and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meetings held on 25 September be confirmed as accurate records of proceedings.

27. COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

Consideration was given to the inclusion of any items on the work programme.

The Chair read a statement to the Committee.

The statement detailed information from the Strategic Director of Resources regarding the audit backlog in England and consultations the Strategic Director had undertaken with other local authorities, external auditors, and central Government. The Government had resolved to clear the national audit backlog and improve the national audit system. The Council had written to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to receive advice regarding an inability to meet the backstop date for the financial year of 2023/24. No response or guidance had been received to date.

The Chair has requested that the Strategic Director of Resources provide a report to the December 9 Committee to keep members up to date with the Council's position in respect of backstop dates.

28. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023-24

The Head of Finance presented the report.

Following discussions between the Head of Finance and the Chair, it was agreed that the recommendation for the report would be revised to note the Annual Governance

Chairman's initials

Statement rather than approve it. This would allow Members to comment on the statement and changes be made before it was brought back to the Committee in February.

A member noted the importance of the document and commended the progress that had been made, though they expressed some concerns around the provision of budget related information and clarity regarding future challenges.

It was moved by Councillor A Barker, seconded by Councillor R Sutton, and

RESOLVED THAT:

The Annual Governance statement 2023/24 be noted by the Committee.

29. TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT - QUARTER 2

The Head of Finance presented the report.

It was moved by Councillor R Johnson, seconded by Councillor JG Simmons, and

RESOLVED THAT:

The Treasury Management 2024-25 Quarter 2 Activity Report be noted.

30. CORPORATE RISK UPDATE

The Head of Finance presented the report.

The Committee discussed some of the Corporate Risks from the updated Register. Members raised a range issues around safeguarding, the budget, redundancy risks, recruitment and retention and procurement. Officers advised Members on various pieces of work ongoing to mitigate risks including ongoing budget work, with the Finance Settlement expected 19 December; an update to procurement procedures, which would be reported to the Governance Working Group; concerns around staffing would also be addressed in the new Workforce Strategy to be published in 2025.

Members also discussed the Freeport, which was a significant potential risk, and whether this was being adequately covered within the quarterly risk updates. Officers set out some procedural considerations and governance arrangements regarding the Freeport and the Council's role, and it was agreed that Officers would consider presenting a more detailed report about the Freeport to a future committee meeting.

It was moved by Councillor JG Simmons, seconded by Councillor N Smith, and

RESOLVED THAT:

The latest Corporate Risk Register be noted.

31. STANDARDS AND ETHICS REPORT - QUARTER 2

The Interim Head of Legal and Support Services and Monitoring Officer presented the report.

It was moved by Councillor A Barker, seconded by Councillor R Johnson, and

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be received and noted.

32. QUARTER 2 AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Audit Manager presented the report.

A Member expressed concern at the delays with the payroll recommendations, and the impacts delays in this service could have on various other services across the Council. The Head of Finance advised that the recommendations related to Finance and Human Resources systems. Progress was being made to resolve the issues, and it was important to thoroughly correct any issues with these crucial systems before tackling other issues.

At this point the Committee requested to move into confidential session to discuss the restricted information at appendix 2 of the report.

It was moved by Councillor P Moulton, seconded by Councillor R Sutton and

RESOLVED THAT:

In pursuance of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the business to be transacted involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

A discussion was had.

It was moved by Councillor R Johnson, seconded by Councillor JG Simmons, and

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.38 pm