

Minutes

Audit Committee

Date: 26 July 2024

Time: 10:30

Venue: FSHQ

Present:

Cllr Renshaw (in the chair) Cllrs Ahmed, Buckley, Carlisle, Parnham and Wood

In Attendance:

Paul Burnham (independent Person for Audit), Paul Hewitson (remote attendance from Deloitte) Simon Straker (Kirklees Audit) and Greg Charnley (Grant Thornton)

Apologies:

None

1. Minutes of last meeting held on 26 April 2024

Resolved

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2024 be signed by the Chair as a correct record

2. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

4. Admission of the public

There were no items requiring the exclusion of the public from the meeting.

5. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to any item of business on the agenda.

6. Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

Members considered a report from the Director of Finance and Procurement which presented the Annual Governance Statement for approval.

Members challenged the report author on the financial position regarding the long awaited ruling on working hours and questioned if there had been any effect on the payment of business rates collected by District Councils following the change in the Automated False Alarm (AFA) response protocol.

In depth discussions followed regarding the outstanding 2022/23 audit and the delay in the confirmation of the backstop date, which is currently 30 September 2024 but subject to change. Deloitte confirmed they are currently expecting to issue a disclaimed audit report for 2022/23 in line with the sector and guidance issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW). Exact dates and fees will be released as soon as they become available.

Members expressed their interest in becoming involved with the Community Safety Partnerships and the work done in connection with the Authority's responsibilities under the Serious Violence Duty.

With regards to the self assessment exercise on the Authority's compliance with the Financial Management Code, reported to the Finance and Resources Committee on 15 October 2021, Members requested further details of the 3 standards which were assessed as amber on the RAG rating. These were:

- The Authority has carried out a credible and transparent financial resilience assessment
- The Authority has engaged where appropriate key stakeholders in developing its long-term financial strategy, medium term financial plan and annual budget
- The Authority uses an appropriate documented option appraisal methodology to demonstrate the value for money of its decisions

These 3 standards have now been fully implemented.

Resolved

That the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24 be approved.

7. Financial Outturn 2023/24

Members considered a report from the Director of Finance and Procurement which reported on the financial outturn for 2023/24; including the Member Allowances Outturn and the draft Statement of Accounts for 2023/24.

Members challenged the report author on the following points:

- The mortality assumptions made in the Statement of Accounts.
- The shortfall in the top up grant received from Central Government which reimburses the cost of the 2015 Firefighters pension scheme.
- How insurance claims are funded
- Grants that could be missed due to not reaching the required conditions

- The dispute with SAP
- When the Council Tax Reform grant, which has been paid since 2014, is expected to expire.
- If there is further data available on possible asbestosis claims.

Members were pleased to note the revenue underspend.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

8. Internal Audit Quarterly Report

The Chief Finance and Procurement Officer submitted a report which provided a summary of the audit activity for the period April – June 2024.

In the period two audits have been completed; Hydrant Management and Maintenance and Purchasing Cards and the Disbursement Account, both of which received a substantial assurance opinion. In addition there is one audit that is currently in progress; Fraud and Corruption for which members were provided with a verbal update. The full report will be available at the next meeting of the Audit Committee

Resolved

That the report be noted.

9. Auditors Annual Report 2021/22

The external auditors, Deloitte presented the Auditors Annual Report for 2021/22.

Members welcomed the report as a good news story and requested clarification of the materiality levels used in the audit.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

10. Abridged Performance Management Report

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Corporate Services which informed members of the Authority's performance against Key Performance Indicators where targets are not being achieved during 2023/24 and the period 1 April 2024 to 16 June 2024.

Members discussed the increase in non fire related incidents which relate to the MoU with Yorkshire Ambulance Service to assist in gaining entry to properties, which is not a statutory obligation but a humanitarian option. Members were asked to note that fatalities relating to road traffic collisions (RTCs) are not included in the fatalities figures.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

11. Risk Management Strategy Group (RMSG) Quarterly Update

Members were presented with a report from the Director of Corporate Services giving details of the risk management activity and developments reported to the Risk Management Strategy Group (RMSG) in June 2024 and highlighting any future risks or risk related areas.

Members were advised there is 43 risks, including 8 very high risks and in the period considered 15 risks have been reviewed.

Members challenged the report author on the terminology used and the option to review the classifications was discussed.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

12. External Audit Progress Report

The External Auditor introduced a report giving the progress made with the 2023/24 audit and the expected timings for each deliverable item.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

Chair