



Chairman - Councillor M G Dodson

Present (for all or part of the meeting):-

Councillors:

A M Loughran

A R McNaughton

D P Rouxel

Also present:-

Councillors R P Cooke (Resources Portfolio) and L Nixon

Officers in attendance:-

C Forrester	-	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources)
J Aupers	-	Head of Transformation and Assurance
S Baddeley	-	Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager
J Dean	-	Democratic Services Officer

AAC7 Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2024 as published on 21 June 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

AAC8 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K M Aspin and P A Leason.

AAC9 VFM Progress Report - Quarter 1 2024/25

Considered the report of the Head of Transformation and Assurance advising Members on the progress in the delivery of the VFM Improvement Plan at the end of Quarter 1 2024/25, as previously considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 3 October 2024.

The Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) reported that he had met with the Council's new external auditors who advised that a multi-year recovery process would be the most appropriate way forward rather than trying to achieve it all in year one. Significant progress was made in the last week, Mr Forrester was pleased to announce that the outstanding accounts for 21/22 and 22/23 would be published on the Council's website shortly thanks to the work of Emma Fullagar and the whole finance team. Grant Thornton advised that at the next meeting of the Committee they would use the backstop legislation to issue an audit opinion on the accounts. Future years accounts were to be "re-set" over forthcoming years to move back towards achieving an unmodified audit opinion. A prioritisation will take place with the new external auditors on the order of the elements of the accounts to "re-set" first.

Continuing, the Head of Transformation and assurance acknowledged there had been some slippage in Quarter 1, but endeavoured to report quarter 2 information at the next meeting of the Committee, noting the emerging associated Cabinet reports recently considered by Leadership Team.

Referring to paragraphs 5.2 and 5.5 of the report, the Chairman sought assurance that Council departments were adequately resourced and had the support of the Cabinet, particularly in the use of market supplements to fill vacant posts. Councillor R P Cooke confirmed that this was indeed the case.

In conclusion Mr Forrester provided an explanation for the wording in paragraph 6.1 of the report.

Members duly voted on the recommendation as set out, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that in accordance with the powers delegated to the Committee the progress at the end of Quarter 1 2024/25 in the delivery of the VFM Improvement Plan, as set out in appendix 1 of the report be noted.

AAC10 Internal Audit Update - September 2024

Considered the report of the Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager presenting for Members information a progress report on the work of Internal Audit up to 30 September 2024.

Mr Baddeley referred Members to the associated appendices to the report before responding to questions concerning:-

- Vacancies within the Internal Audit department (now fully staffed)
- The partial assurance granted to Tree Management
- Provisional audit plan work for 2024/25 not yet started

Councillor A M Loughran was pleased to see the progress made in addressing some of the long-standing issues, namely IT processes, tree maintenance and street scene.

Members duly voted on the recommendation as set out, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that in accordance with the powers delegated to the Committee the content of the report be noted.

CHAIR