



Chairman - Councillor M G Dodson

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

Councillors:

K M Aspin

P A Leason

A M Loughran

A R McNaughton

J T Rose

Also present:-

Councillor R P Cooke (Resources Portfolio)

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

#### **AAC11 Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2024 as published on 8 November 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

#### **AAC12 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D P Rouxel (substituted by Councillor J T Rose).

#### **AAC13 Statement of Accounts 2021/22 and 2022/23**

Considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and Section 151 Officer reporting on the process for the approval of the statement of accounts for the financial years ended 31 March 2022 and 2023.

Chris Forrester detailed the content of paragraphs 3 and 5 of the report, confirming that the Council was compliant with all associated legislation. The lack of experienced chartered accountants within the public sector was noted, proven by the difficulties in procuring extra resources, hence the revised timetable as set out in paragraph 5.6 of the report. The Council's new external auditors were comfortable with the suggested new approach for the publication of 'draft' accounts.

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:-

- (a) the following be noted:-
  - (i) The Statement of Accounts 2021-22 (as detailed in appendix 1 of the report);
  - (ii) The Statement of Accounts 2022-23 (as detailed in appendix 2 of the report);
  - (iii) (The findings of the External Auditor (as set out agenda item No 3(b);
  - (iv) The impact of the audit backlog legislation.
- (b) the Management Representation letter, as included at Appendix 3 of the report be approved.

The Committee commended the Finance Team for their efforts in this area of work.

#### **AAC14 Final External Audit Reports**

Considered the report of Grant Thornton regarding the conclusion of the audits for 2021/22 and 2022/23 containing:-

- draft disclaimer of opinion 2021/22
- draft disclaimer of opinion 2022/23
- letter of representation 2021/22
- letter of representation 2022/23

The Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) confirmed that these would be the last reports received from the Councils outgoing external auditors.

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 reports of Grant Thornton be received.

The associated letters of representation were duly signed by the Chairman of the Committee.

## **AAC15 Risk Management Policy, Strategy and Risk Appetite Statement**

Considered the report of the Head of Transformation and Assurance informing Committee of the Council's revised Risk Management Policy and Strategy.

The Head of Transformation and Assurance proposed that the Councils overall risk appetite be set at moderate, as detailed in paragraph 7.2, before confirming that associated training would be provided for all Members and Officers, where appropriate.

The Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager reported that this approach provided more clarity to service managers and allowed Members to be better informed during the decision-making process.

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:-

- (a) the Risk Management Policy and Strategy set out in appendix 1 of the report be noted;
- (b) the Risk Appetite Statement be noted and the risk appetite be set at Moderate.

## **AAC16 Strategic Risk Register**

Considered the report of the Head of Transformation and Assurance setting out details of the Council's Strategic Risk Register as at 30 September 2024.

The Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager highlighted the new risk (town centre regeneration projects) as detailed in appendix 2 of the report before addressing questions raised by Members concerning:-

- Risk C2 - Economy Risk
- Risk C5 - Key Contractors Risk
- Merits of introducing a 'climate change' risk

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 draft Strategic Risk Register and the progress made in the identification and management of the strategic risks be noted.

### **AAC17 VFM Progress Report - Quarter 2 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 2 2024/25.

The Head of Transformation and Assurance reported that the Council's new external auditors recognised that associated matters would take time to address, and had subsequently been reprofiled over 2025/26 to make targets more achievable.

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:-

- (a) the progress at the end of Quarter 2 2024/25 in the delivery of the VFM Improvement Plan set out at appendix 1 of the report be noted;
- (b) the revised target timescales as set out in the improvement plan at appendix 1 of the report be approved.

### **AAC18 Annual RIPA Review**

Considered the report of the Head of Law and Governance providing details of the use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) by the Council.

The Head of Transformation and Assurance reported that said powers had not been used by the Council since 2015.

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