

Public Document Pack

Minutes of the meeting of the **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Thursday, 27 September 2018 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor P G Heath

Councillors: B W Butcher
P I Carter
M I Cosin
M R Eddy
M J Holloway (as substitute for Councillor D Hannent)

Officers: Director of Governance
Head of Legal Services
Head of Finance
Accountant (Capital and Treasury)
Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership)
Deputy Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership)
Audit Manager (Grant Thornton)

17 APOLOGIES

There were apologies for absence received from Councillors S F Bannister and D Hannent.

18 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor M J Holloway be appointed as substitute for Councillor D Hannent.

19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor M I Cosin made a Voluntary Announcement of Other Interests (VAOI) by reason that her nephew was a Director at Grant Thornton (external auditors).

20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 28 June 2018 and 30 July 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21 REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION 2018 - COUNCIL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The Director of Governance presented the report to the Committee. Members were reminded that the Governance Committee, at the request of Councillor M R Eddy at its meeting held on 28 June 2018, had recommended to the full Council a proposal to amend Council Procedure Rule 12 to make provision for written answers to questions asked on notice by Members at meetings of the full Council. The proposal was not adopted by the full Council at its meeting on 25 July 2018 due to concerns over its wording. The Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition explored options for alternative wording which would achieve the intended aim.

RESOLVED: (a) That it be recommended to the Council that it amend Council Procedure Rule 12 of the Constitution of the Council to include the addition of a new rule 12.5 as follows:

“12.5 A Member raising a question under Council Procedure Rule 12.1 will be provided at the closure of the Council meeting with the written information prepared by officers as background to the relevant member of the executive’s verbal answer to the question. This written information will be made available to all other Members of the Council alongside the following week’s edition of the Members’ Weekly News.”

(b) That it be recommended to the Council that the amendment take place with immediate effect so as to enable its application at the meeting of the full Council to be held on 31 October 2018.

22 QUARTERLY INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE REPORT

The Deputy Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership) introduced the Quarterly Internal Update report to the Committee. There had been eight audits conducted and 10 follow-up reviews completed during the period.

Members discussed the Homelessness audit and the partially limited assurance opinion. It was recognised that expenditure for all Councils was increasing as a result of the increase of Homelessness. The length of stay in temporary accommodation was excessive in some circumstances and whilst evidence suggested some people were being moved out of temporary accommodation more quickly, there was a shortfall of permanent accommodation available. The Head of Finance reported that a number of projects were underway. Some properties had already been purchased and the Council was in the process of buying other units. A total of 63 new builds would be created in the William Muge and Snelgrove housing development by 2020.

It had been requested by the Committee at its meeting held on 28 June 2018 that a follow-up review be carried out of East Kent Housing – Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Groups. The Deputy Head of Audit Partnership reported that the assurance opinion had been increased to reasonable and would be reported to the Committee at its meeting in December.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

23 GRANT THORNTON ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2017-18

The Audit Manager (Grant Thornton) presented the Annual Audit Letter to the committee. The letter summarised the key findings arising from the work Grant Thornton had carried out at Dover District Council for the year ended 31 March 2018.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Audit Letter be noted.

24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER ONE REPORT 2018/19

The Head of Finance introduced the Treasury Management Quarter One Report 2018/19 to the Committee. The Council's investment return for the June quarter was 1.96% which outperformed the benchmark by 1.41%. The projected investment return was £20k better than the original budget estimate of £999k.

The Council remained within its Treasury Management and Prudential Code guidelines during the period.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

25 PROPERTY INVESTMENT REPORT

The Head of Finance presented the Property Investment Update to the Committee which had been requested by the Governance Committee at its meeting held on 30 July 2018. The Property Investment Strategy was approved by Council on 30 November 2016 and the update summarised the progress to date.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

26 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was moved by Councillor B W Butcher, duly seconded and

RESOLVED: That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the business on the grounds that the items to be considered involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

27 QUARTERLY INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE REPORT

The Director of Governance and Head of Audit Partnership introduced the report.

Members were advised that the Sandwich Historical Boatyard was now in the ownership of the Council. A new Commercial Solicitor had been appointed and a 9 point checklist had been implemented for staff in the Legal department for any future lettings of leases.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 6.36 pm.