

Minutes of the meeting of the **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Thursday, 4 December 2014 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor T J Bartlett

Councillors: K E Morris
M R Eddy
S J Jones
A S Pollitt
M A Russell

Also Present: Emily Hill, Grant Thornton
Lisa Robertson, Grant Thornton

Officers: Director of Finance, Housing and Community
Director of Governance
Head of Corporate Services
Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership)
Auditor (East Kent Audit Partnership)
Senior Accountant (Revenue and Treasury)
Director of Shared Services
Head of Asset Management, East Kent Housing
Mr S Hale (Head of ICT - EK Services)
Mr B Ryan (Chief Executive, East Kent Housing)
Democratic Support Officer

32 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received from Members.

33 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute Members appointed.

34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received by Members.

35 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 25 September 2014 and 2 October 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

With regard to Minute Number 18 and the Limited Assurance level awarded to fire safety as reported at the last meeting, a verbal update was given to the Committee by the Chief Executive of East Kent Housing (EKH) and the Head of Asset Management of EKH. Members were assured that of the 29 recommendations made as a result of the audit, 9 remained outstanding and would be completed by December 2014. Grab packs and evacuation plans were being rolled out to all sheltered housing schemes with the last of the packs being delivered imminently. Councillor M A Russell, a Member of the East Kent Housing Board, assured Members that the Board was keeping a very close eye on the health and safety of tenants.

36 ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman proposed that the order of business be varied to take agenda item 9 (Treasury Management Quarter Two) at agenda item 5 (Risk Management).

RESOLVED: That, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 14, the order of business be amended in order that agenda item 9 be considered at agenda item 5.

37 TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER TWO REPORT

The Director of Finance, Housing and Community presented the Treasury Management Quarter Two report. The Committee was advised that the Council had remained within its Treasury Management and Prudential Code guidelines during the period.

The Council's in-house investments and investments with the investment managers, Investec had outperformed their benchmark. The total interest received for the quarter was £69,000 with a projected budget for the year to be £22,000 approx. better than the £246,000 budget.

RESOLVED: That the Treasury Management Quarter Two report be noted.

38 RISK MANAGEMENT

The Head of Corporate Services presented the Risk Management Report to Members. The Risk Management Framework was reviewed annually and required the Governance Committee to review its processes. The report illustrated the adopted policies and practices contained within the Risk Management Framework and the methods used to identify and classify risks based on their type, impact and likelihood.

Councillor M R Eddy raised some concern regarding the forthcoming General Elections in May 2015 and that staffing levels during this time should be factored into the Risk Register. In response, the Corporate Support Manager advised that the Elections would have its own Risk Register and that through good communication and good planning, mitigation was already in place.

RESOLVED: That the Risk Management report be noted and accept the Council's current risk management procedures.

39 QUARTERLY INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE REPORT

The Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership) introduced the report summarising the work completed by the East Kent Audit Partnership (EKAP) over the last quarter and details of the performance of the EKAP to the 30 September 2014.

The Committee was advised that eight internal audit reports had been completed during the quarter, resulting in two classified as providing Substantial Assurance (EKS – Housing Benefit Payments, Anti-Money Laundering), four as Reasonable Assurance (Contract Standing Order Compliance, HMO Licensing, White Cliffs Countryside and Up on the Downs Partnerships, Waste Management), one as

limited (Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Groups) and one split assurance which was partially limited (Planning and s106 Agreements).

In respect of planning and s106 Agreements, the Committee was advised that this was a service that would be moving forward with the implementation of the Digital Future Project which would reengineer many of the processes and administration for planning. An update would be brought back to the committee in June 2015.

In respect of Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Groups the Director of Governance reassured members that the Council was committed to making improvements.

The Head of ICT – EK Services and Director of EK Services gave a verbal update to Members on EK Services – ICT Licensing which was awarded Limited Assurance at the follow up review in the Quarterly Internal Audit Update reported to the Committee in September 2014. Members were advised that the contract EK Services had entered into to purchase the Software Licence was in dispute. The Head of ICT advised Members that an agreed new approach and funding was in place to purchase a new Software Licence and EK Services were working with Audit and the Police in respect of concerns over possible external fraud during the purchasing of the software licence. A further update would be brought back to the Committee in March 2015.

RESOLVED: That the Quarterly Internal Audit Update report be noted.

40 GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Senior Manager – Grant Thornton presented the update and advised Members a full report would come to the Committee in March 2015.

In respect of a challenge question set by Grant Thornton under the topic of 'Managing council property assets', Councillor M R Eddy requested that a report be brought to the Committee in March 2015, in line with the Council's Transparency Code, giving an overview of the properties the Council owns.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

41 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER

The Engagement Lead – Grant Thornton introduced the Annual Audit Letter summarising the work carried out for the year ended 31 March 2014.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Audit Letter be noted.

42 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR MEMBERS

The Director of Governance presented the Social Media Policy to Members. The policy was designed as a guide to members, defining acceptable and unacceptable use of social media to protect members from allegations of breaching the Code of Conduct and to minimise risk to the authority.

Members were advised that the Social Media Policy would be incorporated into the Members Code of Conduct.

- RESOLVED: (a) That the Social Media Policy for Members be noted.
- (b) That it be recommended to Council that the Social Media Policy for Members be approved and incorporated into the Council's Constitution.

The meeting ended at 7.37 pm.