

Minutes of the meeting of the **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Thursday, 27 June 2019 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor D Hannent

Councillors: S S Chandler
J P Haste
S J Jones (as substitute for Councillor C F Woodgate)
J Rose
C A Vinson
P Walker

Also Present: Councillor P D Jull

Officers: Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership)
Head of Finance and Housing
Head of Governance
Democratic Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer

1 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor C F Woodgate.

2 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor S J Jones was appointed as substitute for Councillor C F Woodgate.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

4 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting the Committee held on 14 March 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 QUARTERLY INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE REPORT

The Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership) (EKAP) introduced the Quarterly Internal Update report to the Committee which provided a summary of the work completed by the EKAP since the last meeting of the committee.

There had been six internal audit assignments completed; two achieved substantial assurance, two concluded reasonable assurance, one achieved a limited assurance, and one did not require an assurance rating. Seven follow up reviews had also been completed. A management response was included in the report to the partially limited assurance for the Contract Management review at the time of follow up. Work had been undertaken on Tenant Health & Safety and would be reported to the Committee at a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

6 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Head of Audit Partnership introduced the report to the Committee which provided a summary of the work completed by the East Kent Audit Partnership (EKAP) for the year ended 31 March 2019.

During the period, a total of 99 recommendations were made, of which 90% were in the Critical, High or Medium Risk categories, although none were considered so significant that they needed to be escalated. 77% of the reviews received substantial or reasonable assurance whilst 23% received a limited assurance. There were six reviews completed on behalf of East Kent Housing and eleven completed on behalf of EK Services. Members' attention was drawn to the report and the progress of any follow up reviews.

The overall assessment concluded there were no major areas of concern that would give rise to a qualified opinion. Assurances were given to Members that any significant issues were reported to the s.151 officer and could, if necessary, be escalated for the attention of the authority's chief executive or Governance Committee chairman. EKAP had a duty of care to the authority and there were preventative and protective controls in place.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

7 2018/19 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE ASSURANCE STATEMENT

The Head of Governance presented the Annual Governance Assurance Statement to the Committee. The report had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 3 June 2019 and was accepted. The Leader and Head of Paid Service were requested to sign the statement on behalf of the Council.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 required the Council to conduct an annual review of its systems of internal control and to report on its compliance with its own Local Code of Corporate Governance. The Statement was required to be considered alongside the 2018/19 Statement of Accounts. Members were directed to the report and the significant governance issues and improvements during the year. Following the Local Boundary Commission's consultation on the new electoral arrangements for Dover District Council, the Council size was reduced from 45 to 32 members and the wards were reduced from 21 to 17 new wards.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Governance Assurance Statement be accepted alongside the 2018/19 Statement of Accounts.

8 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE ARRANGEMENTS

The Democratic Services Manager presented the Review of Committee Arrangements report to the Committee which had been requested by Council at its meeting held on 17 May 2019 where it asked for a review of Dover District Council's current committee structure and the number of seats on each committee.

The review followed The Dover (Electoral Changes) Order 2019 that reduced the number of district councillors from 45 to 32 and the number of wards from 21 to 17. The report provided members with an analysis of the impact of the change in council size on the Council's committee arrangements and provided members with the various options available for their consideration.

Having considered the report Members discussed the options available, which included: reducing committee sizes (subject to statutory minimum sizes where they applied); changing the committee structure; changing the number of scrutiny committees, and the arrangements for the election of the Chair of scrutiny committees in light of statutory guidance issued in May 2019.

A scrutiny committee, whether it be two or one, was legislatively required under the Local Government Act 2000 for an authority that operated executive arrangements. Dover District Council had a two scrutiny model with 10 members on each committee. A survey of CIPFA Nearest Neighbour councils and other Kent district/borough councils operating the executive model found that the majority were operating a single committee model. Members were of the opinion that a single scrutiny model, combining the work of two committees, would be the most favorable and that no changes needed to be made to the chairmanship, which would remain as a member not from the controlling group. It was considered too risky to radically reduce some committee sizes to a committee size of 5 members as it would increase the risk of meetings being inquorate more regularly. Members were of the opinion that the committee sizes should remain the same.

Members thanked the Democratic Services Manager for the report and acknowledged the broad and complex remit of the report.

RESOLVED: That, having considered the current committee structure and size, the Governance Committee recommend the following to the full Council for its consideration:

(a) Committee Structure (non scrutiny)

That there be no change to the number of committees (excluding scrutiny committees) or to the number of seats on each committee.

(b) Scrutiny Committees – Number

That the number of scrutiny committees be reduced to the statutory minimum number of one committee and that the new overview and scrutiny committee be composed of 10 seats.

That consequential constitutional changes as set out in Appendix 3 of the report to facilitate a single overview and scrutiny committee be approved

(c) Constitution Changes – Lead Members

That there be no changes to the Constitution in respect of the participation of lead members on scrutiny committees.

(d) Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of scrutiny committees

That there be no changes to the method by which the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of scrutiny committee(s) are elected.

- (e) That it be noted that officers will consider any other matters arising from the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities as part of the annual Review of the Constitution in 2019.

The meeting ended at 6.54 pm.