

Minutes of the meeting of the **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Tuesday, 21 January 2020 at 6.01 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor D Hannent

Councillors: J P Haste  
S J Jones  
C A Vinson  
P Walker

Officers: Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)  
Head of Finance and Housing  
Head of Governance  
Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership)  
Deputy Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership)  
Democratic Services Officer

21 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Rose.

22 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute Members appointed.

23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

24 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 September 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25 QUARTERLY INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE REPORT

The Deputy Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership) (EKAP) introduced the Quarterly Internal Audit 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 6 internal audit assignments completed; two achieved substantial assurance, two concluded a split reasonable/limited assurance, and one reasonable assurance. EKS/Civica Housing Benefits Quarterly Testing for quarters 1 and 2 2019/20 were also completed and an assurance level was not applicable. Members' attention was drawn to the audit conclusion at paragraph 2.6.3 and advised that the two periods referenced were quarters 1 and 2 respectively.

In addition, four follow up reviews had been completed during the period. Both East Kent Housing – Tenant Health and Safety (Gas Safety) and East Kent Housing – Tenant Health and Safety (Legionella) had received an improved revised assurance level after follow up. Following its original reasonable/limited assurance, Waste Management and Street Cleansing gave rise to reasonable assurance after follow-

up. EKAP were confident the reporting system had been put right and the contractors were no longer advised of when spot checks would take place. More vigorous and effective inspection regimes were in place Members were encouraged by the improved assurance. It was essential to have robust management of the contractor and to monitor the service's performance data in the forthcoming months.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

26 TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER TWO REPORT 2019/20

The Head of Finance and Housing introduced the Treasury Management Quarter Two 2019/20 report to the Committee. It was reported that the Council's investment return for the period to September 2019 was above the benchmark by 2.42%. Due to the decision to withhold investing in further pooled funds due to the uncertainty around Brexit and the political and global economic climate, the forecast interest and dividends income for the year was slightly below the original budget. Members discussed the current low interest rate and the budget estimate for the forthcoming year, which was comparable to 2019/20.

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

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

27 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT

The Head of Governance presented the Annual Complaints report which provided Members with the number of complaints received through the corporate complaints process for each service provided by the Council for the financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Members' attention was drawn to appendix 1 of the report and were advised that the complaints received for Governance and Housing Options services had decreased and should have read -4 and -6 respectively. Whilst thirty-four complaints were received for Council Tax and NNDR for the period 1 April to 31 December 2019, (and which appeared high in comparison to other services) for the number of service users this was proportionally low.

The Head of Governance verbally updated Members on the outcomes of the six complaints that had escalated to the Local Government Ombudsmen and would provide this within future reports as well as further detail and context of the complaints.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 6.57 pm.