

Minutes of the meeting of the **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** held as a Teams Live Events remote meeting on Thursday, 1 October 2020 at 6.05 pm

Present:

Chairman: Councillor D Hannent

Councillors: S S Chandler  
S H Beer  
S J Jones  
P D Jull  
J Rose  
P Walker

Officers: Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)  
Head of Governance  
Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership)  
Deputy Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership)  
Engagement Lead (Grant Thornton)  
Engagement Manager (Grant Thornton)  
Democratic Services Officer

11 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

12 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members appointed.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

14 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15 AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT AND SECTOR UPDATE

Members considered the Audit Progress and Sector Update report that was presented to the Committee by the Engagement Lead for Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditors. The report provided members with details of the current position of the auditor's work and issues arising from the local government sector.

Members' attention was drawn to the new Code of Audit Practice framework, introduced by the National Audit Office, and the introduction of a revised approach to the audit Value for Money which would come into effect from audit year 2020/21. Members and officers discussed the Redmond Review, the impact of Covid-19 and the impact of Brexit on the authority. It was the view of the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) that this report was a generic review of local authorities and did not consider the unique issues for the Dover district in terms of Brexit, Covid-19 and business rates and cited the Channel Tunnel, which would be impacted by both

Covid-19 and Brexit; the effect of these on the Dover district would be far greater than other authorities.

RESOLVED: That the Audit Progress and Sector Update report be noted.

## 16 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 to 30 June 2020.

There had been five internal audit assignments completed of which three concluded substantial assurance and one reasonable. EKHR – Benefits in Kind had received a split reasonable/limited assurance. EKAP were confident the issues that gave rise to the split assurance would be addressed in the coming months to raise the assurance.

After follow-up East Kent Housing – Tenants’ Health and Safety Lifts had increased to reasonable assurance from no assurance and the East Kent Housing – Tenant Health and Safety Fire Safety follow-up review was still to be completed and would be reported to the next meeting of the committee in November.

Concern was raised by Members that ten planned audit days for Planning Enforcement had been deferred and requested that these be re-instated in the 2020/21 Audit Plan. The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) commented that the Regulatory Service, which managed Planning Enforcement, was under pressure as a result of Brexit to recruit circa 140 staff by June/July 2021 and that this was likely to have attributed to the decision to remove the audit days.

Regarding the Dog Control Service the Deputy Head of Audit Partnership would report back to Councillor P D Jull outside of the meeting on whether sheep worrying was within the scope of the audit although he did not think it was.

RESOLVED: That with the re-inclusion of 10 audit days for Planning Enforcement in the 2020/21 Audit Plan, the Quarterly Internal Audit Update report be noted.

## 17 2019/20 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE ASSURANCE STATEMENT

The Head of Governance introduced the 2019/20 Annual Governance Assurance Statement (AGAS) to the Committee and explained that it was required to be published alongside the Statement of Accounts. The AGAS was produced later in the year than in previous years. This was as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and an amendment made to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which required the Statement of Accounts to be approved by 30 November 2020 instead of 31 July.

The Head of Governance advised Members that the report had been considered and approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 September 2020 and the typo error relating to the number of complaints which had been reviewed by the Local Government Ombudsman in 2018/19 in that report had been corrected for the Governance Committee report. The Leader and Head of Paid Service would be made aware of the correction before signing the statement on behalf of the Council.

RESOLVED: That the 2019/20 Annual Governance Assurance Statement be accepted alongside the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts.

The meeting ended at 6.52 pm.