

Minutes of the meeting of the **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Thursday, 7 July 2022 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor D Hannent

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

Also Present: Key Audit Partner (Grant Thornton – External Auditors)

Officers: Solicitor to the Council
Head of Finance and Investment
Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership)
Deputy Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership)
Democratic and Corporate Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S S Chandler and D A Hawkes.

2 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Democratic Services Officer advised that no notice had been received for the appointment of substitute members.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

4 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2022 were approved as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

5 VARIATION TO ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman announced that the order of business would be varied from that set out in the agenda. The Members of the Committee agreed with the new order of business.

6 EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2020/21

The Key Audit Partner for Grant Thornton (External Auditors) presented the Audit Plan for the year ending 31 March 2021 to the Committee.

With regard to the outstanding management responses to general audit and IT questions, the Head of Finance and Investment advised these responses were due to be provided to Grant Thornton imminently.

In addition, Members were advised that the 2019/20 Financial Statements had not yet been signed as there was a technical issue that prevented all audits being signed.

RESOLVED: That the External Audit Plan 202/21 be noted.

7 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE BROADCASTING AND RECORDING OF MEETINGS

The Monitoring Officer presented the report on the Arrangements for the Broadcasting and Recording of Meetings to the Committee which sought amendments to the Council's Constitution to enable the continued broadcasting of meetings and the use of the electronic voting system. In addition, the Governance Committee was required to consider the recording of meetings and to make recommendations to the Council for its consideration.

Considering the recording of meetings, Councillor S H Beer proposed that that the trial period for the broadcasting and electronic voting during meetings be extended for a further three months to allow the processes to embed and for members and officers using the new systems to gain confidence before the recordings be available to the public.

This motion was seconded by Councillor S J Jones who in addition expressed concern that the recording of meetings being available to the public to view following the end of the live broadcast may also stifle the debate in a meeting with some people being conscious they were being broadcast and recorded.

Councillor P D Jull recommended the retention period of the recordings be a week following the next scheduled meeting of the committee. The Monitoring Officer advised that the Minutes of the meeting were the official record of a meeting and that having the recording available beyond the approval of the Minutes would not be advisable.

On being put to the vote, the motion proposed by Councillor Beer and duly seconded by Councillor Jones was LOST.

The Chairman, Councillor D H Hannent moved to accept the voting system and remote broadcasting be incorporated into the constitution and for the recording of meetings be trialled for a period of three months and for this to be reviewed again at the end of the trial period. Councillor Beer expressed concern that if the public were to have access for three months it would be difficult to then potentially remove this.

On being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED: (a) That it be recommended to the Council that the Constitutional amendments to enable the continued broadcasting of meetings and the use of the electronic voting system set out in Appendix 1 of the Arrangements for the Broadcasting and Recording of Meetings report be approved and incorporated into the Council's Constitution (Issue 24).

- (b) That it be recommended that the broadcast of meetings and the electronic voting system on the grounds as set out in the report be approved.
- (c) That the recording and retention of broadcasts for a period of 30 days be trialled for a 3-month period and reviewed at the end of this trial.

8 COMPLAINTS SELF-ASSESSMENT

The Democratic and Corporate Services Manager introduced the Complaints Self-Assessment report to the Committee. The self-assessment had been undertaken in respect of the Council's complaints process specifically in relation to housing complaints using the Housing Ombudsmen toolkit. The self-assessment would be published on the Council's website.

RESOLVED: That the Complaints Self-Assessment report be noted and the self-assessment be published on the Council's website.

9 QUARTERLY INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE REPORT

The Deputy Head of Audit Partnership introduced the Quarterly Internal Audit Update report to the Committee. There were no further updates to the report and no significant areas to draw Members' attention to.

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

10 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Head of Audit Partnership introduced the Annual Internal Audit report to the Committee which provided a summary of the work undertaken by East Kent Audit Partnership during 2020/21 and supported the audit opinion. Members' attention was drawn to the Overall Opinion within the Annual Internal Audit report and specifically 5.3 - Risk Management.

RESOLVED: (a) That Members noted the Opinion of the Head of Audit Partnership.

- (b) That Members noted the Annual Report detailing the work of the EKAP and its performance to underpin the 2021-22 opinion.

The meeting ended at 6.36 pm.