

Public Document Pack

Minutes of the meeting of the **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** held as a Teams Live Events remote meeting on Thursday, 26 November 2020 at 6.00 pm

Present:

Chairman: Councillor D Hannent

Councillors: S H Beer
S S Chandler
P D Jull
P Walker

Officers: Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership)
Deputy Head of Audit Partnership (East Kent Audit Partnership)
Head of Finance and Investment
Head of Governance
Head of Leadership Support
Benefits Manager (Civica)
Democratic Services Officer

18 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

19 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members appointed.

20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

21 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2020 were approved as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

22 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT

The Head of Leadership Support presented the Annual Complaints Report to the Committee which provided the number of complaints received for each service provided by the Council for the financial years 2019/20 and from April to October 2020.

It was highlighted to Members that there was a two stage corporate complaints process for Council services although there was a slight variation to the Housing Management Service, that had come back in-house on 1 October 2020, and that it had a three stage process, with the complaint being referred to the Portfolio Holder for further investigation and then onto the Ombudsmen if necessary.

Members noted the reduction in the number of complaints received overall and welcomed the reduction of Planning Enforcement complaints.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

23 QUARTERLY INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

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 September 2020.

There had been two internal audit assignments completed, Cemeteries and EKHR Disclosure and Barring Service Checks, and were concluded Substantial and Limited Assurances respectively. The Limited Assurance was hoped to be raised to Reasonable Assurance having received a completed Action Plan. Following concerns from Members given the nature and seriousness of the area of work, the Deputy Head of Audit Partnership agreed this would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee in March, once the follow-up was completed.

Two follow up reviews were also completed during the period and there was confidence in East Kent Housing – Tenant's Health and Safety – Fire Safety, raising its Assurance to Reasonable now that the service was back in-house and given time to become embedded.

Members were assured that overall, the audit plan was progressing well despite the Tier 3 Covid measures in place in Kent. Staff had been co-operative in assisting audit work remotely and any areas that couldn't be completed remotely would be pushed back in the audit plan.

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

24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTERS 1 AND 2 2020/21

The Head of Finance and Investment presented the Treasury Management Quarter One and Two 2020/21 report to the Committee. The report provided details of the Council's treasury management for the quarters ended 30 June 2020 (Q1) and 30 September 2020 (Q2). It was reported that the Council's investment return for Q1 was 2.80% which outperformed the benchmark by 2.67% by 30 September 2020. The total forecast interest and dividends income for the year was £129k below the original budget estimate as at 30 June 2020 although a slight improvement as at 30 September 2020 was reported.

The Council had remained within most of its Treasury Management guidelines with an exception that the limit on short term borrowing had been exceeded earlier in the year, protecting the council's cashflow whilst assessing the impact of the Coronavirus lockdown. The Prudential Code guidelines had been complied with during the period.

Members considered the report and various elements were explained and clarified. Members thanked the officers for their hard work in producing the report and congratulated the team for their hard work throughout the year.

RESOLVED: That the Treasury Management Quarter 1 and 2 2020/21 report be received.

25 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Prior to the meeting a decision had been made by the Head of Governance that as the report at Item 9 (Annual Debt Collection Report for East Kent Services) of the agenda did not contain significant information relating to the financial position of

individuals or individual companies it was not necessary to exclude the press and public and that the report could be considered in public.

26 ANNUAL DEBT COLLECTION REPORT FOR EAST KENT SERVICES
(MANAGED BY CIVICA LIMITED)

The Annual Debt Collection report for East Kent Services was presented to the Committee by the Benefits Manager, Civica UK Ltd. The annual report was constitutionally required to provide an overview of the debt and write-off position for debts managed by Civica UK Ltd.

The Benefits Manager summarised the report and Members passed their thanks to officers for their work. It was noted that the Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery – Bad Debt Provision figure in the table at paragraph 9 of the report should read £1,792k.

RESOLVED: That Members noted

- (a) The value of income collected and write-offs for each type income, as set out in the report;
- (b) The generally high collection rates;
- (c) The aged debt profile.

The meeting ended at 6.55 pm.