



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

6 October 2020

7.00 pm – 8.25 pm

Remote Meeting

Minutes

Membership

Councillor Nigel Studdert-Kennedy (Chair)	P	Councillor Colin Fryer	A
Councillor Tom Williams (Vice-Chair)	P	Councillor Karen McKeown	A
Councillor Dorcas Binns	A	Councillor Keith Pearson	P
Councillor Miranda Clifton	P	Councillor Mark Reeves	P
Councillor Stephen Davies	P		

A = Absent P = Present

Officers in Attendance

Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer	Head of Audit Risk Assurance (ARA) (Chief Internal Auditor)
Strategic Director of Resources	Senior Democratic Services and Elections Officer
Senior Accounting Officer	
Principal Accountant	

AC.023

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Binns, McKeown and Fryer.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Fryer to the committee and thanked Councillor Curley for her work on the Committee.

AC.024

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

AC.025

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 29 July 2020 and 25 August 2020 are approved as a correct record.

AC.026 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were none.

AC.027 **COUNTER FRAUD AND CORRUPTION POLICY STATEMENT AND STRATEGY 2020-2023**

The Head of ARA introduced the report and informed Members that there had not been any major changes to the counter fraud approach and that it was a refresh of the existing strategy. The policy would be presented to a meeting of Full Council on the 22 October 2020 for adoption and awareness training for officers would follow in order to promote the strategy and the whistleblowing arrangements.

Councillor Davies thanked the team for the work carried out on the strategy and stated it was very comprehensive.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED **To recommend to Council that it approves the Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement and Strategy (including Anti Bribery Policy and Anti Money Laundering Policy) 2020-2023.**

AC.028 **INTERNAL AUDIT ACTIVITY PROGRESS REPORT 2020/21**

The Head of ARA introduced the first progress report in relation to the Internal Audit Plan 2020/2021 and the work that had been carried out between July and September. It was confirmed that the audits had been undertaken mostly online with the occasional physical meeting to discuss fraud or irregularities across the partnership. The Head of ARA confirmed that the officers and managers had been very supportive in aiding the process and it had worked very well.

RESOLVED **To note:**
a) The progress against the Internal Audit Plan 2020/21; and
b) The assurance opinions provided in relation to the effectiveness of the Council's control environment.

AC.029 **INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2020/21 (Revision)**

The Head of ARA introduced the report and referred members to page 70 of the document pack which gave a position statement on each proposed audit. Three audits were proposed to be deferred; Youth Services, Review of the Council's Constitution and Housing Benefits Over Payments. Due to the work the Audit team had carried out to support the Revenue and Benefits Team with the grants process there were now less assurance days available to carry out Audits, the Head of ARA brought the Committee's attention to the proposed deferred audits on pages 77, 79 and 86. It was also confirmed that they had redefined the audit days on the other audit activity and included additional activities in respect of Stratford Park Leisure Centre and the Covid 19 Recovery Plan.

In response to a question from Councillor Clifton about the careline service and how the views of service users could be taken account of the Head of ARA agreed to give further thought to

the process however it was also advised that they would usually look at what the management team were doing to ensure they contact service users for feedback.

The Head of ARA explained the differences between the various priority levels, priority 1 reflects statutory requirements or as deemed necessary by the Chief Internal Auditor to enable an opinion on the control environment to be provided. Priority 2 are the remaining identified activities. The Strategic Director of Resources confirmed that this was an agile audit plan and would be kept under review.

Councillor Reeves raised questions about the audit of the constitution and in particular the Scheme of Delegation related to planning matters. The Chair asked the Councillor to put his views in writing and share with the Monitoring Officer.

- RESOLVED**
- a) **Consider the proposed changes to the Internal Audit Plan 2020/21; and**
 - b) **Approve the revision (subject to any further change requested by Members) as detailed in Appendix 1.**

AC.030 **1ST QUARTER TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY REPORT 2020/21**

The Senior Accounting Officer gave an update on the work of treasury management during the first quarter. The report identified the returns on the Council's investments, this included the investments in property funds. It was noted that in the current climate it was difficult to secure the best interest rates.

The Chair thanked Officers for all their hard work in achieving good returns during a difficult time.

- RESOLVED:** **To accept the treasury management activity first quarter report for 2020/2021.**

AC.031 **PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS AND THE ARRANGEMENTS UNDER WHICH ALLEGATIONS CAN BE INVESTIGATED**

The Monitoring Officer gave an update on the amendments to The Code of Conduct which had been previously presented to Committee on 25 August 2020. In response to a question in respect of paragraph 3.5 the Monitoring Officer explained that the issues outlined were examples of how the Monitoring Officer would 'sift' the complaints before proceeding.

- RESOLVED** **To approve the final draft documents and recommend them to Council for adoption**

AC.032 **STANDING ITEMS**

- (a) Work Programme

There were no additions or amendments to the Work Programme.

- (b) Risk Management

The Chair reported that there had not been any significant changes or issues to note.

AC.033

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

There were none.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm.

Chair