

Extraordinary Audit and Corporate Governance Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 18th January, 2022.

Present:- Councillors Sabah (Chair), Ali, Brooker and Grewal.

Parish Council Representative - Iftakhar Ahmed (Wexham Court)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Gahir, Kelly and Smith

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Wright, J Davis and Hussain.
Iqbal Zafar (Co-Opted Independent Member)
Dr Louis Lee (Independent Person)

PART 1

43. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Brooker declared that he was a member of Britwell Parish Council. He remained and participated in the meeting.

44. Revised Terms of Reference for the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee and for the proposed new Standards Committee

The Committee were reminded that the Governance Review published in October 2021 recommended, as a matter of priority, a review of the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee as outlined in the LGA governance review in 2020. Following consideration of the revised terms of reference at its meeting in December 2021, the Lead Commissioner recommended to Members that they should adopt the CIPFA model terms of reference and establish a Standards Committee for the purpose of upholding ethical standards and to undertake the work of the existing Determination Sub-Committee.

In presenting the amended ToR, Members were informed that these were an exact duplicate of the CIPFA model terms of reference; which included a requirement for the Committee to produce an annual report to Full Council, incorporating a statement of its effectiveness; the right to report to Cabinet if it is considered that an issue is of such concern that Executive action is required; and the right for the Head of Internal Audit and the External Auditor to meet with the Committee in private without officers if required. Members asked a number of questions relating to how the standards committee would operate. The Monitoring Officer explained complaints would be assessed and determined as they currently were and referred to the determination sub-committee if required. All matters would be considered in the public domain unless there were specific reasons for excluding the press and public.

A Member asked that paragraph 36 of the revised ToR be amended to make clear that the Committee's regular reports to Council would be provided no

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less than once per annum and it was noted that the ToR would be amended to reflect this prior to submitting to Council.

Parish Councillor Ahmed, on behalf of Wexham Court Parish Council, welcomed the revised ToR and the establishment of a stand-alone Standards Committee.

Members also resolved to recommend to Council that the membership of the new Standards Committee should be drawn from the Members of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee. The rationale for seeking same membership to both committees was because it was felt that this particular group of Members had been trained in both activities; thus providing expertise and knowledge as well as consistency to the new Standards Committee. The Monitoring Officer explained that best practice would be to have separate membership on the Committees which would strengthen governance arrangements. It was noted that Council could take into account the views of the Audit Committee at the time appointments were made but that this should not be enshrined in the Constitution.

Addressing the Committee under Rule 30, Councillor Kelly stated that the Conservative Group welcomed the strengthening of the ToR. Clarity was sought however regarding what details were required for the annual statistical report on members declarations of interests and specific information in relation to sanctions available to the Standards Committee when determining complaints. The Monitoring Officer explained that the statistical report would record the interests of members and senior officers.

The Committee agreed to refer the report to Council for adoption. The Chair of Wexham Parish Council requested that the Parish Council's dissent be recorded in relation to recommendation (b).

Resolved –

- a) That Council approves the establishment of a Standards Committee and adopts the Revised ToR and the Proposed ToR at its next Ordinary meeting.
- b) That Council give consideration to membership of the new Standards Committee to be drawn from the Members of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.

45. Member Training Programme for the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee

The Monitoring Officer set out details of the proposed member training programme, which included modules on Charing Skills and Cyber Security; as requested by the Committee at its meeting in December 2021.

Whilst welcoming the revised training programme, Members asked whether the training would be mandatory and the timeline for delivery of sessions. It was confirmed members would be required to complete the necessary

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training modules prior to sitting on the Audit Committee and roll out of the programme would commence as soon as possible. It was noted that sessions would be delivered in person and most likely be half day sessions.

Resolved -

- (a) That the training programme, as set out in section 6 of the report, be approved; and
- (b) That the programme should be delivered to the timetable agreed by the Chair.

46. Date of Next Meeting - 1 March 2022

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 1 March 2022.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.11 pm)