

Chairman - Councillor A M Loughran

Present (for all or part of the meeting):-

Councillors:

R A James

P W Jones

J A Nixon

C V Trowbridge

Also present:- Cabinet Member - Councillor R M Smith - Deputy Leader
and Resources Portfolio

Officers in attendance:-

Mr R Kean	-	Head of Finance
Mrs J Aupers	-	Head of Governance
Mr S Baddeley	-	Senior Internal Auditor
Mr J Dean	-	Democratic Services Officer

AAC1 Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2021, as previously circulated, were agreed as a correct record.

AAC2 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M G Dodson (substituted by Councillor C V Trowbridge) and I D Fordham.

AAC3 Stafford Borough Council Audit Plan – Year Ending 31 March 2021

Considered the report of Grant Thornton which provided an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of the Council.

In the absence of representatives of Grant Thornton, the Council's Head of Finance introduced the report and highlighted the headline issues as set out on page 6 of the agenda.

Continuing, Mr Kean appraised elements of the document for Members, specifically:-

- Significant risks identified
- The additional value for money that is to be undertaken
- Audit fee – detailed analysis

The Chairman invited Members to raise any points requiring clarification, with particular reference made to the specific Covid-19 surcharge, to which the Head of Finance detailed ongoing discussions regarding said increase in fees of circa £9500.

Members subsequently voted to receive the report, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee the Stafford Borough Council Audit Plan for the Year Ending 31 March 2021 be received.

The Chairman and fellow Members of the Committee expressed their disappointment that in accordance with their current policy representatives of Grant Thornton were not in attendance to present their report.

Members were informed that in line with current national legislation 'hybrid' meetings of the Council allowing participants to join 'virtually' were in most cases not possible at this time. Councillor Loughran requested that the next meeting of the Committee be scheduled for October 2021, however this was entirely dependent on the publication of the Council's accounts.

AAC4 **Strategic Risk Register**

Considered the report of the Chief Internal Auditor setting out details of the Council's Strategic Risk Register as at 1 April 2021, as considered by Cabinet on 10 June 2021.

The Chief Internal Auditor summarised the risk profile as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report and the overall reduction in risks as detailed in paragraphs 5.5 – 5.6, before referring Members to the associated appendices containing the summary of the Council's strategic risk register as at 1 April 2021 and the full strategic risk register.

Members sought clarification relating Risk Nos C7, C1 and C5 which was duly provided by Officers.

Members then voted on the recommendation as set out, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee the Strategic Risk Register be received and the progress made in the identification and management of the strategic risks be noted.

AAC5 Internal Audit Annual Report 2020-21

Considered the report of the Chief Internal Auditor presenting the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2020-21.

The Chief Internal Auditor referred Members to the associated Appendix 1 of the report and those audits with limited/partial assurance.

Continuing, Mr Baddeley brought Appendix 2 to Members attention, highlighting paragraphs 2.8 - 2.9 and 4 - 5 for specific consideration, before addressing points raised regarding:-

- Cyber and network security
- Tree management
- Internal Audit working paper design and use of technology

Members then voted on the recommendation as set out, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee:-

- (a) the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2020-21 be noted;
- (b) the Head of Technology be invited to attend the December 2021 meeting of the Committee and provide an action plan addressing Members IT concerns.

AAC6 Annual Governance Statement 2020-21

Considered the report of the Head of Governance setting out the Annual Governance Statement for the year 2020-21.

After noting paragraph 3.5 of the covering report the Head of Governance referred Members to Appendix 1 and noted the mechanisms in place to provide assurance and the key sources feeding into that process. Continuing, the significant governance issues as set out on page 89 of the agenda were detailed, along with those matters which had been deferred to allow resources to be focussed on planning for recovery from the effects of the ongoing CV19 pandemic.

Members then voted on the recommendation as set out, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee the Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21 be approved.

AAC7 Mr Bob Kean, Head of Finance

The Chairman and fellow Members paid tribute to Bob Kean who was attending his last meeting of the Committee prior to his imminent retirement and requested that his hard work and commitment to the Council be placed on record.

CHAIR