



Minutes

AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date:	Thursday, 21 January 2016
Venue:	Town Hall, St Annes.
Committee Members:	Councillor John Singleton, JP (Chairman) Councillor David Donaldson (Vice-Chairman) Councillors Delma Collins, Peter Collins, Roger Lloyd, Barbara Nash, Edward Nash, Roger Small.
Other Councillors:	Councillor Sue Fazackerley
Officers Present:	Paul O'Donoghue, Tracy Morrison, Savile Sykes and Katharine McDonnell
Other Attendees:	Christopher Paisley (KPMG)

1. Declarations of interest

Members were reminded that any disclosable pecuniary interests should be declared as required by the Localism Act 2011 and any personal or prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. There were no declarations of interest.

2. Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 26 November 2015 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

3. Substitute members

The following substitutions were reported under Council procedure rule 24(c):

Councillor Barbara Nash for Councillor Graeme Neale

Standards Items

4. Issues raised with the Monitoring Officer (INFORMATION ITEM)

The Committee received the Monitoring Officer's periodic report regarding standards issues raised since the previous report in September 2015.

Tracy Morrison, Monitoring Officer, outlined to members the process for dealing with allegations of misconduct by elected members, and where the Committee's role would fall. Ms Morrison provided clarity regarding the committee's role in hearing the outcomes of standards investigations. She advised that investigations were usually conducted by the Deputy Monitoring Officer or an independent investigator. However, under the current framework, the emphasis was on informal resolution of issues, wherever practical, without the necessity for formal investigation.

A member of the Committee raised a query regarding staff conduct as distinct from elected members conduct. Ms Morrison explained that there was a code of conduct for officers, which articulated expected standards of conduct for employees, which ran in tandem with other employment procedures and processes.

Audit Decision Items

5. KMPG Certificate of Grants and Returns – Annual Report 2014/15

Christopher Paisley (KPMG) presented the certification of claims and returns annual report for 2014/15. He explained that the letter presented to the committee, confirmed the certification of one claim, the Housing Benefit Subsidy claim, for £25.5m. He advised that there were no recommendations for the council arising from certifying the claim.

It was therefore RESOLVED to note and accept the contents of the Certification of Claims and Returns annual report for 2014/15.

6. KMPG – Appointment of External Auditors

Christopher Paisley (KPMG) advised the committee that following the recent change in legislation and the closure of the Audit Commission, the responsibility for the appointment of external auditors would now fall to individual councils from 2017/18.

Mr Paisley advised that an Audit Panel would need to be established, a procurement method decided upon and a procurement process undertaken to engage an external auditor. The legislation dictated that the external auditor must be appointed by 31 December 2017.

He further advised that the Audit Panel needed to comprise a majority of independent, non-elected members, with an independent chairman. The Audit Panel would assist and advise the Council through the procurement exercise, and therefore independent members with an accountancy or audit background would be preferable.

Mr Paisley advised that the external auditor must be chosen from an approved list and there were various options for the procurement route for the Council to consider.

It was RESOLVED to note the contents of KPMG's report 'Appointing Your External Auditor'.

Audit Information Items

The Committee received the following information items:

7. Heritage Assets Register Progress

The committee received an update on the progress of the Heritage Assets Register. Savile Sykes, Head of Internal Audit advised that the Heritage Assets Register was now completed.

8. Internal Audit Interim Report 2015/16

The committee received information regarding the progress of planned audits against the Internal Audit Plan for 2015/16. The committee noted some slippage due to staffing issues.

9. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000: Authorisations

The committee noted that there had been no Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000: Authorisations in the last quarter.

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