



MINUTES

AUDIT AND STANDARDS Committee

Date:	Thursday, 16 March 2023
Venue:	Town Hall, St Annes.
Committee Members Present:	Councillor Ellie Gaunt (Chairman) Councillor Ed Nash (Vice-Chairman) Councillors Delma Collins, Peter Collins, Will Harris, Paul Hayhurst, Viv Willder.
Officers Present:	Paul O'Donoghue, Tracy Manning, Sharon Wadsworth Fiona Hill (MIAA) and Louise Cobain (MIAA)
Other Attendees:	Nick Raynor and Paul Hewitson (Deloitte) attended remotely

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. No interests were declared on this occasion.

2. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meetings held on 19 January 2023 and 25 January 2023 as correct records for signature by the Chairman.

3. Substitute Members

The following substitutions were reported under Council Procedure Rule 23(c):

Councillor Viv Willder for Councillor John Singleton JP

Standard Information Items

4. Issues Raised with the Monitoring Officer

The Committee received a report on standards related matters raised with the Monitoring Officer during 2022/23.

Update on the external audit.

Prior to the start of the decision items the chairman invited Deloitte to update members on the status of the external audit. In doing so Nick Raynor advised that continued progress was being made and that they now had all the information required on infrastructure assets, based on the new guidance issued by CIPFA. A provisional date of 20 April 2023 was provided for when the 20/21 accounts would be available.

Audit Decision Items

5. Internal Audit Charter

Louise Cobain, MIAA, was invited by the Chairman to present the Internal Audit Charter. Ms Cobain explained that the charter was mandated through the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (2016) and was a formal document that defined the internal audit activity's purpose, authority and responsibility. The internal audit charter established

the internal audit activity's position within the organisation; authorised access to records, personnel and physical properties relevant to the performance of engagements; and defined the scope of internal audit activities.

It was RESOLVED to approve the Internal Audit Charter.

6. Internal Audit Plan 23-24

Louise Cobain, MIAA, presented the revised 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan that contained the programme of reviews for the current financial year. Ms Cobain explained that the plan had been constructed following an assessment of audit need by considering a range of factors, such as significant changes in staffing, systems and procedures, the length of time since an area was last audited and items in the Corporate Plan and Strategic Risk Register. There had also been extensive consultation within each service which had taken an overview of audit requirements.

It was RESOLVED to approve the revised Internal Audit Plan 2023/2024.

7. Internal Audit Progress Report

Councillor Gaunt invited Fiona Hill, MIAA, to present the Internal Audit Progress report in respect of the progress made in against the Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

The key areas included the completion of three reviews. The Property Repairs and Maintenance review achieved a Limited assurance rating with three high, four medium and one low recommendations; the Conflicts of Interest review achieved a Substantial assurance rating with three medium and seven low recommendations, and the Budgetary Control review achieved a High assurance rating with just two low recommendations.

Ms Hill advised that all outstanding recommendations had been followed up with good progress being made on them by officers.

Councillor Gaunt enquired about the vacancy of the Estates and Assets Manager post. Tracy Manning, Deputy Chief Executive, advised that the role was currently being covered by the Estates and Asset Officer with specialist estates advice supported by Lancashire County Council.

It was RESOLVED to note the Internal Audit Progress report.

8. Constitution Working Group – Closure Report

At the final meeting of each committee for the current term of office the working groups and boards that have been established and appointed by the committee will be formally closed and disbanded where appropriate to create the opportunity for the new council to review and determine the most appropriate arrangements under the new governance structure.

The Chairman, Councillor Gaunt, thanked her fellow members of the Constitution Working Group and the officers involved for their hard work, dedication, and contribution.

It was RESOLVED to disband the Constitution Working Group and acknowledge that the members of the Group appointed by the committee had fulfilled the intended objectives and aims set by the committee.

Audit Information Items

9. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000: Authorisations

The committee received information regarding the review of the use of covert surveillance and covert human intelligence sources by the council at least quarterly. It was noted that in the quarter up to March 2023, there had been no authorised operations.

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