



MINUTES

Audit and Standards Committee

Date:	Thursday, 20 May 2021
Venue:	Town Hall, St Annes
Committee Members Present:	Councillor John Singleton JP (Chairman) Councillor Ellie Gaunt (Vice-Chairman) Councillors Paula Brearley, Delma Collins, Peter Collins, Brian Gill, Will Harris, Paul Hayhurst and Viv Willder.
Officers Present:	Tracy Manning, Ian Curtis, Hannah Kirk and Katharine McDonnell

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 meeting held on 18 March 2021 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

3. Substitute Members

The following substitution was reported under Council procedure rule 23(c):

Councillor Will Harris for Councillor Sally Nash-Walker

Councillor Viv Willder for Councillor Ed Nash

Councillor Paul Hayhurst for Councillor Kiran Mulholland

Audit Decision Items

4. Local Government Association – Voluntary Model Code of Conduct

Tracy Manning, Director of Resources, introduced the current position in respect to the consideration of the Local Government Associations (LGA) Code of Conduct which had been developed as a result of a recommendation from the Committee on Standards in Public Life (2019).

Sher reminded members that representatives of the Fylde and Blackpool committee members had met for a consultation workshop last summer to provide feedback to the LGA on the model code. The model code was now in circulation.

She advised that members would need to reach a view on whether to adopt the code of conduct in its entirety, to amend the model code and update it with aspects of the Council's current code or to update the Council's current code as appropriate with parts of the LGA Model code.

As the Independent Persons worked across both Blackpool and Fylde Council's, it was proposed to work in concert with representatives of Blackpool Council's Standards Committee to achieve a coherent code.

It was RESOLVED;

1. That the Director of Resources, together with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee and an independent group member, Councillor Brian Gill, be authorised to review the LGA Code in consultation with representatives from Blackpool Borough Council's Standards Committee and the three Independent Persons, at a summer workshop to consider whether to adopt the Local Government Association Model Code in its entirety, to amend the model code and update with aspects of the Council's current code or to update the Council's current code as appropriate with parts of the LGA Model code and report back to this committee; and
2. That a report be brought back thereon, to the September Committee if time permits, with recommendations for the committee to consider.

5. Constitution Amendment – Terms of Reference - Committees

Tracy Manning, Director of Resources, introduced the report proposing amendments to the terms of reference of the Planning and Finance and Democracy committees.

She advised that a review of the terms of reference had been undertaken towards the end of 2020, which was the first since 2015. A number of amendments to the terms of reference were confirmed at Council in December 2020. A further matter had since arisen regarding economic development. She explained that economic development was currently within the remit of Planning Committee.

As the leaders of Fylde, Wyre and Blackpool Council formed the joint Economic Prosperity Board, for strategic reasons, it was more appropriate for economic development to come under the remit of Finance and Democracy Committee. Planning Committee would act in an advisory capacity in regards to economic development.

In response to questions, it was proposed to further amend the proposed wording in regards to the remit of Finance and Democracy. The proposed wording was to add, after "*sub regional economic initiatives*" the wording "*..., such as the Economic Prosperity Board.*"

It was therefore RESOLVED to recommend the proposed amendments to the terms of reference of the committees (Part 2 and Part 3 of the Council's Constitution – Responsibility for Functions) to Council.

6. Contracts Procedure Rules

Ian Curtis, Head of Governance, presented proposed changes to the Council's contract procedure rules.

The changes proposed were following a good practice review. Mr Curtis advised committee the recent Queen's Speech had indicated there would be a bill forthcoming, during the new parliament, regarding procurement procedures in local government. As such there were likely to be wholesale changes to the rules when the legislation came forward.

Mr Curtis provided a detailed overview of the proposed changes both administrative and substantive.

In response to questions, Mr Curtis advised that in regards to imposing an upper limit on exempt contracts, there were already a number of assurances in place. An exempt contract fell into the qualified informal procedure and had to be reported to the next available committee. Exempt contracts were also awarded in very limited circumstances, those being an extension of an existing contract, or where there was no realistic competition, or if the Chief Executive was satisfied it was urgent. By imposing an upper limit, it would remove flexibility and would constrain the ability of the council to respond to emergencies.

Cllr Gill proposed an amendment for the officers to add further assurances regarding large exempt contracts. The amendment was seconded by Cllr P Collins.

Following a vote the amendment was lost.

With no further debate, it was therefore RESOLVED to recommend to the next council meeting that the council adopts the changes to the contract procedure rules set out in the appendix to the report.

Audit Information Items

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The following information item was received by the committee.

7. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000: Authorisations

The Committee received the quarterly review of the use, by the council, of covert surveillance and covert human intelligence. It was advised in the quarter to May 2021 there had been no authorised operations.

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