



# MINUTES

## Audit and Governance Committee

<b>Date:</b>	Thursday, 28 September 2023
<b>Venue:</b>	Town Hall, St Annes.
<b>Committee Members Present:</b>	Councillor Michael Withers (Chairman) Councillor Andrew Redfearn (Vice-Chairman)  Councillors Peter Anthony, Ellie Gaunt, Karen Henshaw, John Kirkham, Ed Nash
<b>Other Councillors Present:</b>	Councillors Karen Buckley, Peter Collins
<b>Officers Present:</b>	Paul O'Donoghue, Tracy Manning, Ian Curtis, Louise Cobain and Fiona Hill (Mersey Internal Audit Agency), Katharine McDonnell. Lesley Silcock (MIAA) and Paul Hewitson (Deloitte) attended remotely.
<b>Other Attendees:</b>	One member of the public

### 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 Governance Committee meeting held on 20 July 2023 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

### 3. Substitute Members

The following substitutions were reported under Council procedure rule 23 (c):

Councillor Karen Henshaw substituted for Councillor Joanne Gardner.

### Decision Items

#### 4. External Audit – Position Statement 2021-22 and 2022-23

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, introduced the report that provided the committee with a current position statement with regard to the overdue audit of the accounts for the year 2021/22 and the anticipated timescale for the audit work in respect of financial year 2022/23.

Paul Hewitson, External Auditor Deloitte, advised it was anticipated that the 2021/22 accounts would be completed by the end of the current calendar year. In regards to the 2022/23 accounts, he advised extra staff had been engaged to ensure that these would be completed by the end of the current financial year.

It was RESOLVED to note the audit timetable update provided by the Council's appointed external auditors, Deloitte LLP.

#### 5. Internal Audit Service

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, introduced the report on the council's internal audit service. He advised the service was currently provided under contract by Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA). The current service was a two-year agreement which had run from 1st April 2022 and was due to expire on 31st March 2024. The report before committee set out the effectiveness of the arrangement, the excellent working relationship that had been built between MIAA, officers and members of the committee, and proposed an extension of the agreement with MIAA for a further two-year period until 31st March 2026.

Members of the committee commented on the professional service provided by the MIAA team, the approachability of the staff, their responsiveness, and the quality of the work undertaken so far.

It was unanimously RESOLVED to approve the re-appointment of MIAA, by a direct award under lot 2 of the NHS Business Services Procurement Framework, to provide internal audit services to the council from the end of the present contract until 31st March 2026.

#### 6. Internal Audit Progress Report

Fiona Hill, Engagement Manager MIAA, reported on the progress against the Internal Audit Action Plan 2022/23 so far. She advised that two reports had been issued since the last progress report, these being into the recruitment processes, with substantial assurance given, and only a small number of recommendations.

The second report issued regarding the audit into the Planning MasterGov IT system. Limited assurance had been given with a number of improvement recommendations.

Lesley Silcock, Senior Technology Auditor, who had conducted the review, provided a detailed overview of the critical application review, advising that the scope of the review was limited to the technical aspects of system. She highlighted that the IT team had had a really positive response to the recommendations, and she was pleased with their progress to date.

In response to questions and comments from members, Tracy Manning, Deputy Chief Executive, provided a response stating that all the technical actions had been completed, or risk assessed and recorded in the strategic risk register. She advised that it was not uncommon to have issues with new systems such as this, especially during the implementation phase.

In terms of business continuity and resilience, it was advised that from a technical perspective all the actions had been actioned. The IT Manager had shared the review report with the Emergency and Business Continuity Manager, who was working on a council wide business continuity plan, to ensure all actions and improvements were captured and actioned appropriately.

Louise Cobain, Engagement Lead, MIAA, advised the committee that a further update would be included in the next progress report which would be brought to the next meeting.

Fiona advised that for the 2023/24 plan, all quarter 2 reviews were in progress.

She requested that the committee approve a change to the audit plan, with a request to use the contingency time within the plan to review a grant claim for Changing Places funding.

It was RESOLVED to note the contents of the Internal Audit Progress Report.

#### 7. Chief Executive Terms and Conditions: JNC Handbook

Ian Curtis, Head of Governance, presented the report detailing the updated model procedure for disciplinary proceedings involving chief executives, which applied to all member local authorities, by the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC).

The procedure required local authorities to have three committees: an independent disciplinary committee, an appeals committee, and an independent panel comprising of only independent persons. The report recommended that the existing Chief Officer Employment Committee fulfil the role of the independent

Minutes – Audit and Governance Committee – 28 September 2023

disciplinary committee, the Public Protection Committee to take on the function of the appeals committee, and a new committee to be established to become the independent panel.

It was unanimously RESOLVED to recommend to Council to:-

1. Add the wording *“to fulfil the functions of the Independent Disciplinary Committee as set out in model disciplinary procedure which forms part of the National Salary Framework & Conditions of Service Handbook published by the Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Authority Chief Executives”* to the terms of reference of the Chief Officer Employment Committee, and amend its membership by omitting the independent persons;
2. Add the wording *“to fulfil the functions of the Appeals Committee as set out in model disciplinary procedure which forms part of the National Salary Framework & Conditions of Service Handbook published by the Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Authority Chief Executives”* to the terms of reference of the Public Protection Committee; and
3. Establish a new committee, known as the JNC (Chief Executives) Independent Panel, with the terms of reference amended to say, *“to fulfil the functions of the Independent Panel as set out in model disciplinary procedure which forms part of the National Salary Framework & Conditions of Service Handbook published by the Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Authority Chief Executives”*, and membership being the Council’s three Independent Persons.

#### 8. Independent Persons Allowances

Ian Curtis, Head of Governance, presented the report that followed a joint meeting of the Fylde and Blackpool Independent Remuneration Panels held earlier in the year, to consider the allowances of the Standards Independent Persons. The three Independent Persons (IP’s) served both Fylde and Blackpool Council with respect to standards matters and the handling of allegations of elected member misconduct.

After a discussion, it was RESOLVED to recommend to Council that the allowance for the Independent Persons be set at £1,000 per annum, paid 50% by Fylde Council and 50% by Blackpool Council, backdated from 1 June 2023, with an annual uplift applied thereafter in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI), as agreed in 2021.

#### 9. Constitution Amendments

Ian Curtis, Head of Governance, presented the report to amend the current order of items on an ordinary Council meeting agenda to provide greater clarity.

It was RESOLVED to recommend to Council to amend procedure rule 4.3 of the Constitution in relation to the proposed order of items for ordinary meetings of the Council.

---

#### **Fylde Council copyright 2023**

You may re-use this document/publication (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium. You must re-use it accurately and not in a misleading context.

The material must be acknowledged as Fylde Council copyright and you must give the title of the source document/publication.

Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This document/publication was also available on our website at [www.fylde.gov.uk](http://www.fylde.gov.uk)  
any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to the Town Hall, St Annes Road West, St Annes FY8 1LW, or to [listening@fylde.gov.uk](mailto:listening@fylde.gov.uk).