

Minutes of Accounts & Audit Committee

Meeting Date: Wednesday, 29 March 2017 starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor K Hind (Chairman)

Councillors:

P Ainsworth	G Geldard
S Atkinson	S Hind
I Brown	R Newmark
P Dowson	N C Walsh

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Resources, Head of Financial Services, Solicitor, Caroline Stead and Amelia Payton (Grant Thornton).

Councillors A Knox and R Sherras were not in attendance.

647 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence from the meeting.

648 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

649 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest.

650 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

651 CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS TIMETABLE 2016/2017

The Director of Resources submitted a report reminding Members of the statutory requirement to close down the accounts by 30 June 2017 and publish them, including any certificate, opinion or report issued by the auditor by 30 September 2017. The report also informed Members of the impending changes to the closed down deadlines as detailed from the closure of accounts for 2017/2018 and the intention to close down by these earlier timelines for the 2016/2017 financial year. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 set out detailed requirements in relation to duties and rights and also introduced changes to the key deadlines for approval of the statement of accounts and completion of the audit in future years. The principal matters covered in the Accounts and Audit Regulations were highlighted for Committee's information. The regulations also stipulate various responsibilities for the closure of accounts relating to Members and the responsible financial officer.

The Head of Financial Services informed Members of the transitional provisions under the Accounts and Audit Regulations for the change to the closed down deadlines. He made reference to the issues facing Ribble Valley, which included budget pressures and practical issues including the importance of attending the scheduled meeting for the approval of the audited statement of accounts on Wednesday, 26 July 2017. He outlined a timetable that must be strictly adhered to in order to achieve the deadlines required.

RESOLVED: That Committee endorse the suggested approach for the closure of the 2016/2017 accounts.

652 INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL PLAN 2017/2018

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Committee of the Internal Audit Plan for 2017/2018. This included the various audit areas and planned number of working days for each of these areas. A brief explanation was given as to how the audit plan is arrived at following consultation with Directors, Heads of Service and our external auditors. The risk scoring method was also explained to Members.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the 2017/2018 Internal Audit Plan as outlined.

653 REAPPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS

The Chief Executive submitted a report seeking Committee's approval for the continuation in post of the Council's Independent Persons and to put in place arrangements for review. The Solicitor reminded Members that when the Localism Act 2011 was abolished the requirement for each Council to have a Standards Committee with Independent Members and Chair was also abolished. The requirements that replaced this included the provision for the appointment by the authority of at least one Independent Person. Having followed the required recruitment procedure, the Council appointed two Independent Persons in July 2012 – Mr I B Dearing and Mr I S Taylor. Although there is no statutory limit on the length of service of Independent Persons, it was thought prudent to review their position at this stage as it is almost five years since their appointment.

It was agreed that a report regarding the role of the Independent Persons and the standards regime would be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. confirm the continuation in post of the current Independent Persons; and
2. review these appointments in three years' time.

654 GRANT CERTIFICATION REPORT 2015/2016

Caroline Stead presented a report on the certification of claims and returns. She reported upon one case where the rent figure for the individual claim had been incorrectly input into the system leading to a housing benefit underpayment that

had arisen during initial testing. This meant further testing to a further 40 cases where no further errors were found. This however did mean that an additional fee subject to confirmation from PSAA would be charged.

The Director of Resources reported that the DWP had recently visited the Council to examine the Council's success in producing housing subsidy claims to a high standard. They were keen to identify best practice so that this could be shared with other local authorities.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

655 GRANT THORNTON PROGRESS REPORT UPDATE 2016/2017

Caroline Stead gave a brief update to Members on the progress made to date with the 2016/2017 audit. Most of this was complete apart from the final accounts audit which was planned to take place in June and July. The report also made reference to changes in the 2016/2017 CIPFA code delivering good governance, the local government finance settlement, pooling of LGPS, the recently published Housing White Paper and other issues.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

656 THE AUDIT PLAN FOR RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Caroline Stead submitted a report for Committee's information highlighting Grant Thornton's overview of the plan scope and timing of the audit. The document was also an aid to understanding the consequence of their work, discussing issues of risk and the concept of materiality and identifies any areas where the Council may choose to request to undertake additional procedures. The contents of the plan had been discussed with management. She highlighted that Grant Thornton's responsibilities are to give an opinion on the Council's financial statements and to satisfy themselves that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The plan outlined the challenges and opportunities, developments and other requirements as well as materiality. It went on to identify four significant risks along with others.

She highlighted the value for money conclusion that was supported by three sub-criteria; informed decision making, sustainable resource deployment and working with partners and third parties. The report also highlighted the findings of the interim audit work and the impact of the findings on the accounts audit approach. She reported that at the present time, there was nothing that needed to be brought to the particular attention of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

657 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2016/2017

The Director of Resources submitted a report outlining progress on the internal audit work for 2016/2017. A table setting out the assurance opinions issued from

the audits carried out since the last meeting was included for Members' information. All these audits had received either a full or substantial assurance opinion.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

658 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies.

659 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That the virtue of the next item of business being exempt information under Category 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

660 RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE ON RED RISKS

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information giving an update on the current red risks facing the Council as identified on the Risk Register. At the present time there was only one red risk which continues to be monitored closely relating to the market redevelopment. The Chief Executive gave a brief update on the current situation and informed Committee that regular monitoring of the risk would continue by the appropriate service Committee and this Committee would be kept informed of any future developments.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.25pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Jane Pearson (425111).