

**Minutes of the Audit Committee
12 December 2013**

Present:

Councillor M.J. Madams (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

J.A. Dale

A.C. Patterson

S. Webb

C.V. Strong

Apologies: Apologies were received from Councillors D. Gohil and D. Patel.

338/13 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2013 were approved as a correct record.

339/13 Annual Audit Letter

The Committee considered the external auditors' annual audit letter which summarised the key findings from KPMG's 2012/13 audit of the Council. This included the audit of the Council's 2012/13 financial statements and the 2012/13 Value for Money (VFM) conclusion, on both of which KPMG issued an unqualified opinion.

The Committee thanked the Audit Services Team for their work undertaken which contributed to the final external audit fee of £63,270, an overall reduction of 40 percent on the comparative total fee for 2011/12 of £105,450 and noted that this figure also reflects the significant reductions made nationally by the Audit Commission to its scale fees.

RESOLVED that the external audit annual audit letter for 2012/13 be noted.

340/13 Audit Services Interim Report

The Head of Audit Services presented her report which summarised the work undertaken by Audit Services during the period April 2013 to November 2013 and provided the Council with assurance on the adequacy of its internal audit systems of control.

She responded to questions from members on the risks relating to duplicate payments and the systems in place to safeguard against that risk.

RESOLVED that the audit services interim report for the period April 2013 to November 2013 be noted and approved.

341/13 Corporate Risk Management

The Head of Audit Services reported that the Corporate Risk Register had undergone its regular quarterly review and update by the Corporate Risk Management Group to ensure that actions were being taken to deal with the identified risks. The revised Register was considered to be an accurate

reflection of the high level risks affecting the Authority as well as the progress made on actions previously proposed.

She highlighted progress in a number of areas which were documented on the register. She updated the Committee on the information security risk, an area where proper procedures are in place yet extra resources are needed to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act. She also noted the robust project management systems in place instigated by the Head of Customer Services in her role as Project Manager but highlighted the Council still had 43 ongoing projects.

The Committee asked that the Head of StreetScene attend the next Audit Committee to give an update on progress with the new inspection regime and the provision of internal horticultural expertise to manage the grounds maintenance contract and tree maintenance works as she was unavailable to attend December's Committee.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Corporate Risk Register be noted and accepted and recommended to Cabinet for approval works.

342/13 Confidential Reporting Code (Whistleblowing Policy)

The Head of Audit Services submitted the Confidential Reporting Code (Whistleblowing Policy), which formed part of the Council's Constitution, for review. The Code sets out how to raise serious concerns about any aspect of the Council's work, who to raise them with and how they should be dealt with. The Code is available on the Council's intranet; a bright orange leaflet is posted on every internal notice board and regular reminders are given to staff of its existence. The Head of Audit Services also emphasised that whistleblowers are protected under legislation and that there is an external charity which can be used by staff if they do not wish to raise concerns internally.

RESOLVED to note and approve the Confidential Reporting Code (Whistleblowing Policy) as submitted.

343/13 Anti Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy

The Head of Audit Services presented the report on the annual review of the Anti Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy. She highlighted the steps taken in the past year to improve fraud awareness for all staff and members through the circulation of fraud awareness leaflets and the provision of training.

The Committee discussed central government's proposals to create a centralised fraud investigation service and the implications to the Council's Housing Benefit Fraud team. The Committee noted that the Joint Head of Housing and Independent Living and the Head of Audit Services were liaising with A2Dominion on offering Council expertise with Housing Tenancy Fraud investigations. The Committee requested an update to be given by the Head of Audit Services at the next Audit Committee in March.

RESOLVED to note the review of the Anti Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy.

344/13 Committee Work Programme

The Committee considered its Work Programme for the 2013-2014 municipal year.

RESOLVED to note the Committee Work Programme 2013-2014 as submitted, with the addition of attendance by the Head of StreetScene at the next Audit Committee on 27 March 2014.