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AUDIT COMMITTEE

Meeting: 27 November 2019
At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Stuart Corris (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Mike Hurleston (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Yvonne Guariento, John Pantall and John Taylor.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 24 July 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations of interest were made.

3. URGENT DECISIONS

No urgent decisions were reported.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Members of the public were invited to put questions to the Chair on any matters within the powers and duties of the Area Committee, subject to the exclusions set out in the Code of Practice.

No public questions were submitted.

5. DEBT WRITE OFF

A representative of the Borough Treasurer submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which detailed write offs of low-level amounts of debt for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- The Chair commented that there appeared to be an increase in the number of people who owe a debt to the Council and subsequently cannot be traced. In response, the Chair was advised that officers try very hard to trace people. If they are unsuccessful the debt is passed to a debt collection agency, the debt does not go away.
- Members were informed that the threshold in terms of collecting debt was being put up to 98.75 per cent which was extremely positive.
- Members acknowledged the hard work that was being done by officers in this area.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. STAR PROCUREMENT UPDATE

The Director of Procurement presented a report (copies of which had been circulated) which outlined success to date and the next steps.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Members raised the issue of relationships with the other Authorities in Star Procurement and whether this presented difficulties. In response, Members were advised that this was closely monitored and work was carried out to ensure that there were no potentially destabilising issues. The trajectory continued in an upwards direction.
- The local information was really encouraging, however information relating to social value was difficult to understand from the report. It was agreed that some further information from the portal would be sent out to Members.
- Members asked if any other Boroughs could potentially join and whether any links had been established with Manchester Airport.
- Would it be possible to collaborate with more deprived areas and be slightly more inclusive?

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2 - 2019/20

A representative of the Corporate Director – Corporate and Support Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which set out the progress made by internal audit against the approved 2019/20 internal audit plan for the period 1 July 2019 to 31 October 2019.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Members of the Committee acknowledged the progress that had been made.
- Blue badge parking was raised, in particular where information relating to potential prosecutions was held. In response, Members were advised that these were advertised via the Council's website. A press release relating to this was due to be issued soon.
- It was noted that contracts had not been updated for Bereavement Services, was there a system in place to review this? Members were advised that this was a 20 year contract, so it wasn't that it hadn't been updated more the duration of the contract.
- Members asked about the position relating to foster carers.
- A short discussion took place about the process of continuing professional development.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. SUMMARY REPORT - SCHOOL AUDIT FINDINGS

A representative of the Corporate Director – Corporate and Support Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which communicated to all stakeholders the key and recurring issues, risks and subsequent recommendations made from the 16 internal audits of schools undertaken in 2018/19.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. CIPFA ROLE OF THE HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT - SELF ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN

A representative of the Corporate Director – Corporate and Support Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which updated Members of the Audit Committee on the outcome of the recent self-assessment against the Cipfa document entitled “Role of the Head of Internal Audit”.

RESOLVED – That the outcome of the self-assessment be noted and the subsequent action plan endorsed.

10. CIFAS - FIGHTING FRAUD AND CORRUPTION LOCALLY - SELF ASSESSMENT 2018/19

A representative of the Corporate Director – Corporate and Support Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which updated Members on the “Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally” which is the counter fraud and corruption strategy for local government.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

11. INTERNAL AUDIT PLANNING METHODOLOGY 2020/21

A representative of the Corporate Director – Corporate and Support Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which informed Members of the proposed planning methodology required to produce the Annual Internal Audit Plan (2020/21). This included a timetable for the planning process.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

12. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER 2019/20 (QTR2)

A representative of the Corporate Director – Corporate and Support Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which updated Members on the current status of corporate risks.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- A short discussion took place regarding some of the current risks including Brexit, flooding, climate change and air quality.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

13. MAZARS - AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The External Auditor submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) which provided a summary of the audit progress report.

The following comments were made/issues raised:

- Members of the Committee referred to page 130 of the report which referred to a press release issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited which highlighted the increase in the number of audit opinions that were not available by 31 July 2019. This is clearly an ongoing issue where discussions are continuing.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

14. STOCKPORT MBC ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2018/19 (MAZARS)

The External Auditor submitted the Stockport MBC Annual Audit Letter 2018/19 (copies of which had been circulated).

RESOLVED – That the Annual Audit Letter be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.25 pm