

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee held on
Tuesday, 29 March 2022 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Tony Mason – Chair
Councillor Nick Sample – Vice-Chair

Councillors: Jose Hales
Mark Howell
Geoff Harvey

Officers: Rory McKenna
Patrick Adams
Peter Maddock
Tara Nutbeam-King
Monitoring Officer
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Head of Finance
Corporate Fraud Manager

Auditors: Jonathan Tully
Head of Shared Internal Audit

Councillor John Williams was in attendance, by invitation.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Heather Williams.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Completion of the 2018/19 Audit of the Accounts - Report to Follow

A vote was taken and by affirmation the Committee **Agreed** to defer this item to the next meeting to be held in April as the report had not been in the public domain for five clear working days.

The Deputy Head of Legal advised the Committee that a vote by affirmation was sufficient to take this decision.

5. 2018-19 Audit Results Report from External Audit - Report to Follow

A vote was taken and by affirmation the Committee **Agreed** to defer this item to the next meeting to be held in April as the report had not been in the public domain for five clear working days.

The Deputy Head of Legal advised the Committee that a vote by affirmation was sufficient to take this decision.

6. Internal Audit Update

The Head of Internal Audit introduced this report, which updated the Committee on the recent work of the Internal Audit team.

In response to questioning, the Corporate Fraud Manager, explained that the Fraud team were focussing on countering grant and business relief fraud. A recent investigation had uncovered a false claim of £10,000 for business relief which had resulted in a successful prosecution last week. The Fraud Team were also focussing on protecting the Council's housing assets and detecting social housing fraud and were recommending prosecution in a recent case. Councillor Mark Howell suggested that the work of the Fraud Team should be publicised in order to act as a deterrent.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

7. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Policy and Update on Use of RIPA

The Monitoring Officer presented this report which sought the Committee's approval of the current Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) policy and asked it note that the Council had not used its RIPA powers since its last meeting.

The Committee

Agreed to approve the Council's RIPA policy at Appendix A.

Noted that the Council had not used surveillance powers between January and February 2022.

8. Anti-Theft, Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy

The Head of Finance introduced this report which recommended that the Committee adopt the Corporate Fraud Policy. Councillor John Williams stated that the report vindicated the decision to set up a Corporate Fraud team in 2020. He thanked the officers for the important work that they were doing.

The Head of Finance reported that an apprentice had recently been recruited to fill a full-time vacancy. Work was being carried out to deal with the backlog caused by Covid-19. The Fraud Officer explained that there were various time limitations on investigations which led to the prioritisation of work. In some cases further investigations could be carried out.

Councillor Geoff Harvey supported the need for additional staff and Councillor Mark Howell's suggestion that the work of the Team be publicised. The Chair, Councillor Tony Mason, asked how the Whistleblowing Policy connected to the work the Fraud Team. The Fraud Officer explained that the Corporate Fraud Policy cross-referenced with the Whistleblowing Policy in paragraph 1.4 and the report in

section 7.1. She stated that the team were liaising with HR about the possible need to review the Whistleblowing Policy. The Head of Finance agreed to bring a report on the Whistleblowing Policy to the Committee meeting in July.

The Committee

Agreed to adopt the Corporate Fraud Policy, acknowledging the governing body's responsibility for ensuring that risks associated with fraud, theft, bribery and corruption were managed effectively across all parts of the organisation.

9. Matters of Topical Interest

Russian gas

In response to a question from Councillor Mark Howell, the Head of Finance reported that the Council did not have any direct investments with Russian gas and he agreed to check whether any of the organisations that the Council invested with had such a connection.

RIPA for Shared Services

The Head of Finance confirmed that the Council's RIPA policy applied to those directly employed by the Council and not to Shared Service officers who were employed by a different local authority. The Deputy Head of Legal added that he kept this matter under review and that he was unaware of any conflicts that had arisen due to the Shared Service arrangements.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting had been arranged for Thursday 28 July at 10 am. It was agreed that another meeting should be arranged next week to discuss the signing off of the 2018/19 accounts. The Senior Democratic Services Officer agreed to contact members of the Committee and arrange a suitable date for this meeting.

The Meeting ended at 10.30 a.m.
