

## South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee held on  
Tuesday, 23 March 2021 at 9.30 a.m.

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

Councillors: Jose Hales  
Bunty Waters  
Eileen Wilson

Geoff Harvey  
Heather Williams

Officers: Patrick Adams  
Farzana Ahmed  
Peter Maddock  
Rory McKenna

Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Chief Accountant  
Head of Finance  
Monitoring Officer

Auditors: Suresh Patel  
Mark Russell

Ernst & Young  
Ernst & Young

Councillor John Williams was in attendance, by invitation.

### 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Mark Howell. Councillor Bunty Waters acted as substitute.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

None.

### 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2020 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of the attendance of both Councillor Heather Williams and Councillor Eileen Wilson.

#### Matters arising

No updates were provided on three actions from the minutes of the previous meeting:

- An effectiveness toolkit for members of the Committee.
- Update on the internal audit of HRA gas safety.
- Update on the internal audit of the planning section.

### 4. EY Progress Report on the 2018/19 Statement of Accounts Audit - Report to Follow

Suresh Patel of External Audit introduced this report. He explained that the two major challenges with the 2018/19 accounts were the implementation of a new General Ledger part way through the financial year and the use of a new Fixed Asset Register. He reported that the audit work in respect of areas of the accounts outside of fixed assets was

generally well progressed and was expected to be completed by mid-April. Following audit queries, officers had identified that they needed to carry out an extensive revisit and update of the fixed asset information. He concluded that if officers completed their work on the fixed asset register according to the stated timescale, External Audit expected to complete the audit of these accounts by the end of May.

### **General Ledger**

It was noted that the Council had installed a new software system for the General Ledger during 2018/19 and this had created more audit work. The Head of Finance confirmed that in future, if a new system had to be installed, this would be done at the beginning of financial year.

### **Fixed Asset Register**

The Head of Finance explained that unfortunately some of the data for the Fixed Asset Register for the 2018/19 accounts had to be re-input. He was hopeful that this had rectified the problem.

### **Timescale**

The Head of Finance expressed the hope that the 2018/19 accounts could be completed by May this year, the 2019/20 accounts by the autumn and the 2020/21 accounts by March 2022.

The Chair asked Suresh Patel to resend him the letter asking questions on how the responsibilities of this Committee.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

## **5. Audit of the 2018/19 Accounts**

The Head of Finance presented this report on the position of the 2018/19 accounts. He explained that the officers who worked on the accounts had been busy preparing the budget for 2021/22 and this had delayed work on the 2018/19 accounts. In addition, the Auditors were auditing the Housing Benefits Subsidy claim, which had to be completed on time to avoid a potential financial penalty. Obviously Covid-19 had affected the effectiveness of staff, as they adapted to home working.

### **Audit fees**

The Head of Finance acknowledged that audit fees for the year would be higher than expected, due to their additional work. He agreed to report back on this.

### **Resources**

The Chair stated that accountancy needed extra resources to process the audit of accounts and suggested that this could be cost effective, as it would avoid the need to pay extra fees to our external auditors.

## **6. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Amendments to Policy, Update on use of RIPA & IPCO Inspection Report**

The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Head of Legal introduced this report, which asked the Committee to agree minor revisions to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) policy and note that the Council had not used RIPA powers since June 2020.

Councillor Eileen Wilson left the meeting at this point, due to technical issues.

The Monitoring Officer explained that the IPCO had carried out a virtual inspection on 24 February and concluded that the Council was compliant and that a physical inspection was not necessary at this time.

There were minor proposed changes to the policy which included:

- Change from the Office of Surveillance Commissioners to the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office.
- The authorisation period for a juvenile source was four months from the time of grant or renewal (instead of twelve months) and the authorisation should be subject to at least monthly review.
- The Chief Operating Officer takes on the responsibility of Senior Responsible Officer replacing the CEO.

The Committee **Agreed** the amendments to the Policy and **Noted** that the Council had not used RIPA surveillance powers between June 2020 and February 2021.

## 7. **Matters of Topical Interest**

Councillor Heather Williams requested that:

- External Audit provide the Committee with an effectiveness toolkit, so that it could evaluate its performance.
- The minutes include Matters Arising to ensure that agreed actions are not forgotten.

## 8. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 29 July at 10am, although an additional meeting would have to be scheduled for early June if the audit of the 2018/19 accounts was completed by the end of May, as hoped.

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**The Meeting ended at 10.25 a.m.**

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