

Contact Officer: Yolande Myers

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Friday 13 August 2021

Present: Councillor Yusra Hussain (Chair)
Councillor Paola Antonia Davies (via MS Teams)
Councillor Susan Lee-Richards
Councillor Kath Pinnock
Councillor Steve Hall
Councillor Melanie Stephen
Councillor John Taylor

Observers: Councillor Paul Davies, Councillor Elizabeth Smaje, Chair
of Overview & Scrutiny Committee (via MS teams)

Apologies:

1 Membership of the Committee

No apologies had been received

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Meeting held on 23 July 2021 be approved as a correct record:

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Admission of the Public

It was noted that all agenda items would be discussed in public

5 Deputations/Petitions

There were no deputations or petitions received

6 Public Question Time

No public questions had been submitted

7 information Governance Response to the Pandemic

The Committee received a report setting out the response of the Information Governance (IG) service to the pandemic. The report set out details of the activities carried out in respect of information sharing, data protection, information security

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and requests and provided an outline of the targeted support offered to services throughout the pandemic.

Katy Deacon, Information Governance Manager, explained that the Information Governance Strategy had been refreshed in light of the pandemic. It was reported that the Executive Team had approved the new IG strategy in July 2021 and the strategy is currently being shared with councillors during August. Going forward Council services will each be asked to complete an IG strategy self-assessment, which will help them determine where their Information Governance strengths and weaknesses are in order to allow them to create an action plan, to enable them to improve their IG compliance.

With regard to governance, it was reported that the Council's Information Governance Board will oversee the implementation of the IG strategy. The IG board will review the implementation every six months, to ensure services have the support they need to achieve the strategy outcomes.

During discussion of this item, Councillor John Taylor stressed the importance of involving all Councillors as part of any refresh of the Information Governance Strategy.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the Committee recognise the excellent work of the Information Governance Team during the pandemic
- (ii) That the report be noted

8 Draft Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

The Committee received a report setting out the latest version of the Draft 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement, prior to it being signed off by the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, which concluded that overall the governance arrangements remain fit for purpose. The Committee were requested to consider whether the issues raised reflect the state of the governance and control framework during 2020/21.

It was explained that as the Statement covers the period up until the Annual Financial Accounts 2020/21 are approved, there may be need for revisions to be made in the text to reflect the findings from the external audit and anything material in the intervening period. In this respect any further significant impacts directly or indirectly consequent from the pandemic will need to be reflected in the Statement. In recognition of this situation, the draft document includes a separate conclusion and commentary as recommended by CIPFA / SOLACE.

Simon Straker, Audit Manager, reported that the Statement is a statutory requirement and accompanies the Statement of Accounts in order to provide readers with assurance about the governance and internal control environment in which they have been compiled and to which they relate. The draft Statement has been compiled following the annual review of the effectiveness of the overall internal control and governance arrangements and draws on a number of forms of assurance which have been presented to various parts of the Council.

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Within the draft Statement a number of 'Significant Governance Issues' were highlighted which reflected the unique demands faced during the pandemic as well as the wide-ranging nature of the issues and action required. It was reported that organisational resilience and new funding relationships had been slightly refocussed, with Staff wellbeing being identified as a new Issue in its own right.

Details of the actions and controls the Council is taking were contained within the recommended Action Plan.

In response to a question from Councillor Kath Pinnock, the Audit Manager undertook to look into the omission of governance arrangements of the Local Resilience Forum and make any necessary revisions to the draft statement.

RESOLVED –

That the Committee note the draft report in advance of a finalised version of the Statement being considered by the Committee ahead of the approval of the Annual Accounts later in the year.

9 Update on Audit Process 2020/21

The Committee received a verbal update from Stephen Nixon from Grant Thornton. It was reported that further to the submission of the Audit Plan at the last meeting of the Committee work has progressed well good with engagement and prompt responses from finance team.

Work has started on the vast majority of the balance sheet. Areas of significant risk in audit plan have been focussed on including land and buildings valuations; pension fund liabilities; examination of samples of journals; work on debtors, creditors and income. It is hoped to conclude the work by the government deadline of 30 September 2021.

RESOLVED – That the External Audit update be noted