

Contact Officer: Leigh Webb

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Friday 11th March 2022

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

Apologies: Councillor Melanie Stephen
Councillor Paul Davies (ex-Officio)

1 Membership of the Committee

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Paul Davies and Councillor Mel Stephens.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

That the Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 11 February 2022 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 were submitted.

7 Democracy Commission Update

The Committee received an update on behalf of the Chair of the Democracy Commission which advised that the first Democracy Commission meeting had taken place with the following outcomes:

- The terms of reference set by Corporate Governance and Audit were noted,
- A project plan was agreed setting out who the Commission wished to hear from as part of their review. This included Local Authorities who had changed their governance arrangements, partners and internal witnesses.
- Jacqui Gedman would attend Commission meetings on invitation,

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- Mark Edgell would be invited to evidence-based sessions,
- Councillor Liz Smaje would be invited to attend all Commission meeting as an observer.

Four Local Authorities with a range of governance arrangements had been contacted to arrange evidence-based meetings. The next meeting of the Democracy Commission would be to identify key lines of enquiry in relation to meeting with the Local Authorities.

During discussion of this item, concerns were raised around timescales and work to be completed by the Commission. The Committee also raised concerns with regards to the outcome should the work not be complete by Annual Council May 2022. Councillor John Taylor enquired whether an Extra Ordinary Council meeting could take place which could provide an update of intention, with a decision made at Annual Council in May 2023. Julie Muscroft undertook to provide a response to this issue at the next meeting of the Corporate Governance & Audit Committee in April 2022.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Democracy Commission update be received and noted,
- (ii) That Julie Muscroft provides information regarding an update on intention at an Extra Ordinary Council meeting to the Committee in April 2022.

8 Draft Auditors Annual Report

The Committee received the Draft Auditors Annual Report for 2020-21, as submitted by Grant Thornton.

The report highlighted that under the National Audit Officer the auditors were required to consider whether the Authority had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The auditors were no longer required to give a binary qualified/unqualified value for money conclusion. Instead, auditors reported in more detail on the Authority's overall arrangements, as well as key recommendations on any significant weaknesses in arrangements identified during the audit.

Auditors were required to report their commentary on the Authority's arrangements under specified criteria. As part of the work, the auditor considered whether there were any risks of significant weakness in the authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

It was confirmed that the report had been finalised and was no longer a draft report.

In discussion of this item, concerns were raised around increased inflation costs and interest rates. Concerns were also raised regarding the George Hotel purchase and Dedicated Schools Grant with regards to High Needs.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Auditors Annual Report be received and noted.

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- (ii) That the Finance team be congratulated on the prompt turnaround of the Covid 19 grants.

9 Dates of Council Meetings - 2022 to 2023 Municipal Year

The Committee received a report which set out a provisional schedule of Council meeting dates for the 2022-2023 municipal year. The report sought endorsement of the schedule for submission to the meeting of Annual Council on 25 May 2022.

RESOLVED – That the schedule of Council meetings for the 2022-2023 municipal year be submitted to the meeting of Annual Council on 25 May 2022 with a recommendation of approval.