

Contact Officer: Nicola Sylvester

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Friday 8th March 2024

Present: Councillor James Homewood (Chair)
Councillor Naheed Mather
Councillor John Taylor
Councillor Kath Pinnock

Co-optees Chris Jones

In attendance: Rachel Spencer Henshall, Strategic Director, Corporate Strategy, Commissioning and Public Health,
Leigh Webb, Acting Head of Governance,
Gareth Mills, Grant Thornton
Greg Charnley, Grant Thornton
Simon Straker, Audit Manager (Virtual) Isabel Brittain,
Service Director Finance (Virtual)
Councillor Elizabeth Smaje (ex-Officio)

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

1 Membership of the Committee

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Harry McCarthy, Councillor Melanie Stephen and Councillor Paul Davies (ex-Officio).

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th January 2024 be approved as a correct record.

3 Declaration of Interests

Councillor John Taylor declared 'an other' interest as a Member of the Housing Improvement Board.

4 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

5 Deputations/Petitions

There were no deputations or petitions received.

6 Public Question Time

No questions were asked.

7 Representation on Outside Bodies

The Committee received an update on the Representation on Outside Bodies.

The Service Director, Legal, Governance & Monitoring has delegated authority, in consultation with Group Business Managers, to receive and process nominations to the Outside Bodies. Any Changes in the Council's representation on Outside Bodies are reported to Corporate Governance and Audit Committee for Information.

Since the last update to Committee, changes to the Council's Outside Body representation had occurred and had been incorporated into the Council's database of outside body representation.

RESOLVED: That the update on Representation of Outside Bodies be received and noted.

8 Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

The Committee received a progress report against the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 action plans.

Simon Straker, Audit Manager advised the Committee that issues identified in the 2022/23 statement would form part of the draft 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement. Further actions taken and planned actions in 2023/24 were provided in the report.

During consideration of this item, the Committee referenced the recommendations of the Democracy Commission, and requested an update on the Democracy Commission recommendations at a future meeting.

The Committee felt that the Annual Governance Statement was unclear on the impact of delivery on services and focussed more on process. Rachel Spencer-Henshall, Strategic Director for Corporate Strategy, Commissioning and Public Health advised that the Annual Governance Statement was a focus and through the audit committee and scrutiny panel would ensure the correct content was in future reports.

A discussion took place on housing improvements. The regulator of Social Housing submitted notice to make improvements to the standards of fire safety, damp and mould. It was noted that Kirklees had self-referred to the regulator and understood its responsibilities. Kirklees were taking actions to complete the overdue fire safety actions and were addressing reports of damp and mould.

The Committee reflected on the agenda items of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meetings scheduled throughout the year and requested that documents and agenda items that complimented each other were on the same agenda. The Committee suggested an agenda plan be published and agreed to an additional meeting of this Committee in May 2024.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 be received and noted.

9 Audit Progress Report and Sector Update

The Committee received a verbal update on the audit progress report and sector update.

Gareth Mills, Grant Thornton, updated the Committee on audit team changes following conclusion of the 2022-23 audit cycle and explained that the auditor's statutory responsibilities were to provide an opinion on the audited body's financial statements and work on value-for-money arrangements. The update included a summary of emerging national issues and developments that were relevant along with a number of challenging questions in respect of emerging issues.

The Committee noted that work on the 2023-24 financial statement audit had commenced at the end of 2023. The Value for money report was presented to the Committee in January 2024 which highlighted two key recommendations in respect of the Council's overall financial position and the deficit position on reserves, and that the Council's responses and arrangements would be followed up as part of their 2023-24 Value-for-Money work, along with other improvement recommendations raised. Planned dates for the Audit plan, Audit Findings Report, Auditor's Report and Auditor's Annual Report on VFM arrangements were provided.

RESOLVED: That the Audit Progress Report and Sector Update be received and noted.