

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 6 September 2018 commencing at 3.00 pm and finishing at 4.20 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Nick Carter – in the Chair

Councillor Tony Ilott (Deputy Chairman)

Councillor Paul Buckley

Councillor Charles Mathew

Councillor Les Sibley

Councillor Roz Smith

Councillor Emma Turnbull (In place of Councillor D. McIlveen)

Councillor Liam Walker (In place of Councillor Ian Corkin)

Councillor Glynis Phillips

By Invitation: Ben Pykett, PwC

Officers:

Whole of meeting Peter Clark, Chief Executive; Lorna Baxter, Director for Finance; Ian Dyson, Assistant Chief Finance Officer (Assurance)

The Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except as insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

51/18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Ian Corkin (Councillor Liam Walker substituting), Councillor D McIlveen (Councillor Emma Turnbull substituting) and Dr Geoff Jones.

52/18 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda No. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

53/18 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

It was agreed to defer the minutes to the next meeting on 12 September 2018.

54/18 IMPLEMENTING A NEW OPERATING MODEL FOR OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

(Agenda No. 5)

Ian Dyson outlined the role of the Committee to ensure that there has been good governance in the development of the proposed operating model and to examine the financial elements and associated risks. They must also consider, if the model is adopted by Cabinet, that there are sufficient internal controls and adequate risk management to ensure the continuation of “business as usual” as well as the introduction of new systems.

Peter Clark introduced the report and emphasised that it was not about cuts to services but involved service improvements, community engagement and supporting staff better.

Members raised various issues and the officers and Ben Pykett of PwC responded as follows:

- The estimate for income generation is prudent and reflects the current risk appetite of the council. There could be opportunities to go further – in particular with asset strategy. The Council is already retrieving some costs through charges for adult services.
- Regarding the retention of staff through the period of uncertainty (Agenda Page 361), there has been 18 months of staff engagement in the development process including two staff conferences, activity analyses, briefings and meetings around various council offices. Nobody can give certainty but Oxfordshire is in a far better position than many other councils having taken the necessary tough decisions in recent years.
- The new Chief Executive starts on 1 October 2018 and a series of briefings has been arranged for her. She is fully supportive of the changes and will be backed up by a good team of directors who have been fully engaged in the transformation programme.
- Regarding the joint working arrangements with Cherwell, this operating model will help the County Council to be clearer in itself while engaging with the District Council to identify opportunities for alignment.
- It was agreed that the £3m set aside to support the changes should be recorded in the section on mitigation of the risks to delivery of business as usual activities.
- Regarding the role of the IBC and impact on the operating model, there is further work to be undertaken to identify and remedy any gaps between the existing processes, which is underway jointly as part of the ongoing partnership management.
- New technology will play a key role and the Council has learned from recent difficulties in this regard and is aware of the importance of more robust planning, more staff engagement and training.
- The next stage of the process will deal with implementation options. No decisions have been taken on outsourcing versus in-house support – the model just sets out what the Council needs.

It was agreed that it would be useful to have some sort of joint subcommittee with the Performance Scrutiny Committee to ensure that between them the committees cover all aspects of the transformation programme and avoid duplication.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing