



Audit & Governance Committee Wednesday, 15 September 2021

ADDENDA

11. Constitutional Review Work Programme (Pages 1 - 4)

3.40 p.m.

Report by the Monitoring Officer.

Attached is Appendix 1, the Councillor Engagement Exercise as stated in the report.

12. Audit Working Group (Pages 5 - 6)

4.00 p.m.

Report by the Director for Finance.

This report presents the matters considered by the Audit Working Group meeting of 8 September 2021.

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the report.

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AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2021

CONSTITUTION REVIEW

APPENDIX 1 – MEMBER ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE

A questionnaire was sent to all Councillors to ask for their views on the Council constitution and how it could be improved, the response to the questionnaire is set out below.

Number of responses Received: 12

Please note some respondents did not provide a response to all questions.

Q1: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution provides guidance on how the Council provides leadership to the community in partnership with citizens, businesses, and other organisations?

8	Agree
1	Neither agree nor disagree
1	Disagree
0	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Accessible version would be of great value
- Video or easy read summary beneficial - <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/LearningDisabilityAccessCommsGuidance.pdf>

Q2: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution supports the active involvement of citizens in the process of council decision making?

6	Agree
2	Neither agree nor disagree
1	Disagree
1	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Difficult to find on the website
- Public not aware of the document
- Exploration of Committee Structure and its benefits should be included in review

Q3: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution is easy to understand and is up to date?

2	Agree
1	Neither agree nor disagree
7	Disagree
0	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Flow diagram on decision-making and summary of rules for people unfamiliar with Council processes
- Application of officer delegations and engagement with Cabinet Members
- Reporting of Officer decisions
- Officer obligations to report fraud
- Audit & Governance Committee duties
- Whistleblowing Policy

Q4: Do you agree that the constitution should be improved to make.....

9	the Council more transparent
6	it easier to understand
7	sure it is accurate
3	it less wordy
2	Wording gender neutral
4	Provide flow charts and illustrations
6	Utilise hyperlinks to make central document more focused

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Officer delegations

- Chairs should decide on how they are referred to
- Cabinet and Scrutiny posts require updating
- Training on Chairmanship and rules of procedure would be of use
- Consideration should be given to having an Executive Summary and FAQs

Q5: Do you agree that the language within the constitution could be improved to make it more accessible?

3	Agree
3	Neither agree nor disagree
3	Disagree
1	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Language should remain consistent with that of a formal document
- Language needs to be precise and accurate
- Over-simplification can lead to ambiguity

Q6: Subject to any Statutory Context which consistent use of terminology would you like to see included across the content of the Constitution:

Councillor or Member	Councillor - 6 Either - 2 Member -1
Executive or Cabinet	Cabinet - 8 Depends on which we have - 1
Citizen or member of the public or service user or resident	Resident - 8
Chief Finance Officer or Section 151	CFO - 8 Section 151 - 1

Q7: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution helps councillors to represent their constituents more effectively?

1	Agree
7	Neither agree nor disagree
1	Disagree
0	Other

Q8: Do you think the Constitution enables decisions to be taken efficiently and effectively?

3	Agree
6	Neither agree nor disagree
0	Disagree
0	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Review of benefits of Committee Structure would be beneficial

Q9: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution ensures that those responsible for decision-making are clearly identifiable to local citizens and that they explain the reasons for decisions?

1	Agree
3	Neither agree nor disagree
4	Disagree
1	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Officer delegation levels

Q10: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution creates a powerful and effective means of holding decision makers to public account?

2	Agree
2	Neither agree nor disagree
4	Disagree
1	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Constitution needs to be more prominent to do this effectively

Q11: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution ensures that proposals and decisions are effectively and fairly reviewed?

2	Agree
3	Neither agree nor disagree
4	Disagree
0	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Officer delegation levels and how reported
- Opposition members should Chair O&S Committees
- Audit & Governance should be considered as a O&S Committee

Q10: Do you agree or disagree that the Constitution creates a powerful and effective means of holding decision makers to public account?

2	Agree
2	Neither agree nor disagree
4	Disagree
1	Other

Key themes raised to consider in review scope:

- Constitution needs to be more prominent to do this effectively

Q12: Please tell us about any other comments or suggestions you have as to how the Constitution could be improved.

- Part 2 Article 4 states Full Council meets 6 times per year, is this correct and should it include Annual Council?
- All significant decisions should be referred to Councillors

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AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 15 September 2021

REPORT OF THE AUDIT WORKING GROUP – 8 September 2021

Report by Director of Finance

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the report.**

Executive Summary

2. The Audit Working Group (AWG) met on 8 September 2021. The group received the quarterly update from Internal Audit. Officers attended to provide updates on the implementation of the agreed action plan from the 2020/21 audit of Childrens Placement Vacancies. The group also reviewed the reporting and assurance arrangements over risk management to both the AWG and Audit & Governance Committee.

Introduction

Attendance:

Full Meeting: Chairman Dr Geoff Jones Councillors: Roz Smith, Brad Baines, Donna Ford, Judy Roberts.

Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor, Lucy Tyrrell, Committee Officer, Katherine Kitashima, Audit Manager, Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance, Ian Dyson, Assistant Director of Finance.

Part Meeting:

Tessa Clayton, Audit Manager, Georgina Cox, Senior Auditor, Kevin Gordon, Director for Children's Services, Lara Patel, Deputy Director for Safeguarding and Children's Social Care, Pippa Corner, Deputy Director for Commissioning

Matters to Report:

AWG 21.23 Internal Audit Update

3. The group received an update from the Chief Internal Auditor on progress against the Internal Audit Plan. A full update on plan progress is due to be made to the September Audit & Governance committee.
4. The group considered the executive summaries from the reports finalised since the last update to the A&G committee. It was noted that no further red reports have been issued and the AWG are currently not monitoring any outstanding red reports, as they are satisfied that previous ones have all been reported as effectively implemented.

5. The group noted the positive improvement with the implementation of management actions, and also previous actions which had not been responded to. Where actions remain outstanding from previous financial years these will continue to be followed up by Internal Audit with each Directorate.

AWG 21.24 Audit of Childrens Placements Vacancies 2020/

6. The group received an update on the progress in addressing the weaknesses identified during the audit of Childrens Placement Vacancies. The group were satisfied with the progress made to date in implementing the agreed actions, and noted the further work planned and revised timescales for implementation of the actions not yet implemented. It was agreed that the group would receive a further update on progress in implementation the remaining actions through the routine Internal Audit quarterly update due to the December 2021 AWG meeting.

AWG 21.25 Risk Management reporting to AWG

7. The group considered how the Audit & Governance Committee and AWG are assured on the adequacy and effectiveness of the risk management process that is applied across the Council's services and operations.
8. The group decided that they would continue to receive quarterly updates on risk management, which will focus on the Leadership Risk Register, highlighting any changes, new risk, closed risk, etc. The group also receive assurance on the adequacy of the risk management processes through Internal Audit, the Annual Governance Statement, etc. The group will continue to receive the Risk and Opportunities Management Strategy and progress with actions from the Risk Development Plan.
9. The AWG meeting will include time to consider in detail any areas where additional assurance from risk owners is required, for example major programmes, etc.

LORNA BAXTER,
Director of Finance

Contact Officer: Sarah Cox, Chief Internal Auditor
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Date of next AWG meeting Wednesday 20 October 2021 at 14:00

Agenda items for AWG October 2021 meeting:

- Risk Management Update, including leadership risk register – Louise Tustian
- Statement of Assurance – Fire and Rescue
- Annual Whistleblowing Report and Policy – Anita Bradley/Glenn Watson