

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - 24 November 2022

MINUTES

Present: Councillors: R Grinsell (Chairman), A Adeyemo, M Allen, Mrs D Holl-Allen MBE, W Qais, S Rymer and Mrs G Sleigh (substitute)

Officers: Andrew Kinsey, Martyn Sargeant, Julie Cooper, Adam Patterson, Helen Flinter and Jane Game

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Hogarth MBE, Cllr G Sleigh substituted for him and Cllrs Ashraf MBE and O'Nyons.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Regarding Item 5 Cllr G Sleigh advised she had been appointed by the Council onto the SCH Board. Cllr Allen declared an interest in item 11.

3. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None received.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2022 were presented for approval.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of 29 September 2022 be approved.

5. SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING - BOARD APPRAISAL POLICY

Members were provided with an update on changes made to the Solihull Community Housing (SCH) Board appraisal policy, following feedback from the Committee about the arrangements in place to monitor and review the attendance, contribution and performance of SCH Board members, in particular those nominated by the Council.

Members were advised that SCH had considered the feedback and had made a number of amendments which were presented to Governance Committee for information.

RESOLVED:

That the changes made by Solihull Community Housing to its Board appraisal policy be noted.

6. FINAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2021/22

The Committee was:

- Invited to approve the Council's final Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 included in Appendix A to the report;

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- Invited to approve Grant Thornton's Audit Findings report required by the International Standard on Auditing which summarised the audit work performed so far this year, included in Appendix B to the report;
- Invited to review, comment on and approve the Management Responses to the Improvement Recommendations included in Appendix C to the report;
- Asked to note there were some areas that remained outstanding at the date of the report being published;
- Invited to approve the draft Management Letter of Representation which was included in Appendix D to the report; and
- Asked to note that the report and appendices were presented to Audit Committee on 14 November 2022.

Members noted the issue around the technical accounting for infrastructure assets prevented the 2021/22 accounts being signed off by the deadline of 30 November and were content to delegate sign off approval to the Chairman in conjunction with the Director. Members also noted that the Audit Committee had reviewed the papers presented to the Governance Committee and had raised no specific concerns.

Members asked for clarification on a number of points which Officers responded to, to the satisfaction of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Council's final 2021/22 Statement of Accounts included in Appendix A be approved;
- (ii) That having reviewed the Audit Findings Report from Grant Thornton and their comments under the Value for Money section, included in Appendix B Members approved the report;
- (iii) That having considered and commented on the Management Response to the Improvement Recommendations included in Appendix C, Members approved the response;
- (iv) That approval be given to the Chair of Governance Committee and the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive to sign the accounts at a later date as a result of expected delays as set out in the report;
- (v) That it be noted that in the event that there was a subsequent change required to the Accounts which impacted on the overall financial position of the Council then this would be brought back to the Committee to approve before final sign off; and
- (vi) That the draft Management Letter of Representation, at Appendix D be approved.

7. CODE OF EMPLOYEE CONDUCT POLICY

The Governance Committee was informed of the proposed changes to the existing Code of Employee Conduct Policy.

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Members were advised that the proposed changes sought to strengthen the Code, provide clarity on practice and standards required of employees and other individuals that carry out work for the Council, and ensure consistency and compliance across the HR Policy suite. The key changes were set out in section 3.3 of the report.

Members asked for clarification on a number of points which Officers responded to, to the satisfaction of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Code of Employee Conduct policy be approved.

8. DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY

Members were presented with proposed changes to the Council's Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Misuse policy for approval.

Officers advised Members that the policy was last reviewed in 2018, and the current review incorporated stakeholder feedback around areas in which the policy could be developed and reflected best practice and legal recommendations following the introduction of hybrid working. The inclusion of the proposed changes resulted in a more robust policy document that clarified employees' obligations explicitly by establishing that any misuse neither compromises individuals' health and safety nor jeopardises the ability to deliver business functions efficiently.

RESOLVED:

That the amended Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Misuse policy be approved for implementation.

9. APPOINTMENT TO AN OUTSIDE BODY - GEORGE FENTHAM HAMPTON-IN-ARDEN ENDOWED CHARITY AND THE EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION OF GEORGE FENTHAM

The Committee was invited to appoint a trustee to the George Fentham Hampton-in-Arden Endowed Charity and the Educational Foundation of George Fentham.

RESOLVED:

That Full Council be **recommended** to confirm the reappointment of Ms Josephine Oswald to the George Fentham Hampton-in-Arden Endowed Charity and the Educational Foundation of George Fentham for a four-year term 2022-2026.

10. RIPA – UPDATE REPORT FOLLOWING IPCO INSPECTIONS

Members were provided with an update following an inspection of the use of covert and directed surveillance.

The Solicitor to the Council presented the report and advised Members that the Council have an up-to-date policy/procedure in order to exercise its powers.

RESOLVED:

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That the inspection report be noted and that the updated RIPA policy be approved.

11. CODE OF CONDUCT INVESTIGATION OUTCOME

The Committee was advised of the outcome of an investigation completed recently under the Code of Conduct for Councillors Complaints Procedure.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 18:43