

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - 27 July 2022

MINUTES

- Present: Councillors: P Hogarth MBE (Chairman), R Grinsell (Vice-Chairman), B Groom (Substitute), M McCarthy (Substitute), J O'Nyons, W Qais, S Rymer and M Wilson (Substitute).
- Officers: Deborah Merry, Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Julie Cooper, Head of Financial Operations
Adrian Cattell, Head of Human Resources
Andrew Kinsey, Legal Services Manager and Solicitor to the Council
Adam Paterson, Finance Manager
Mark Wills, Health, Safety & Risk Manager
Paul Sharma, HR Advisor (Policy)
Martyn Sargeant, Executive Director (Customer Service, Transformation and Business Support), Solihull Community Housing
- Apologies: Councillors: M Allen, S Ashraf MBE and Mrs D Holl-Allen MBE
Councillor Adeyemo attended remotely by internet link

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr W Qais declared an interest in respect of the Draft Statement of Accounts 2021-22 in that she was an employee of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), which provided funding for the Council's schools.

2. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

There were no questions or deputations.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2022 be approved as a correct record.

4. SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING - PERFORMANCE OF COUNCIL NOMINEES TO THE BOARD

The Executive Director (Customer Service, Transformation and Business Support) of Solihull Community Housing presented his report setting out the arrangements in place to monitor and review the attendance, contribution and performance of the Board members of Solihull Community Housing (SCH), in particular those nominated by the Council.

He responded to questions from members of the Committee, which included reference to the frequency of appraisals and actions that would be put in place in the event of an unsatisfactory review. He explained that beyond the formal

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appraisal process, induction training, guidance and support was available to Board members throughout the year to support them in their roles.

RESOLVED:

That the Solihull Community Housing Board appraisal policy be noted, and a further report be submitted to the Committee in November 2022 with an update on the appraisal process.

5. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021/22

The Health, Safety and Risk Manager reported that the publication of an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) was a statutory requirement for local authorities in England. The AGS was a public statement that described and evaluated the Council's overall governance arrangements, together with a self-assessment of the effectiveness of the governance arrangements across all areas of activity.

He briefly outlined the content of the AGS and confirmed that on 14th February 2022 the Audit Committee had approved the assurance gathering arrangements and had agreed that the process would provide sufficient evidence on which they could consider and endorse the Statement.

He referred to paragraph 7.3 of the AGS (Deficit on Dedicated Schools Grant) and advised that the figures had been updated since the draft document was produced and that the first sentence should now read:

'At March 2022, the accumulated Dedicated schools grant (DSG) High Needs Block deficit was £13.213m with an in-year deficit of £4.072m.'

The Health, Safety and Risk Manager advised that the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer had each provided individual assurances that the draft AGS accurately described their understanding of the Council's governance arrangements.

He confirmed that on 25th July 2022, the Audit Committee had considered the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2021/22 and had endorsed the content, making no specific points for the Governance Committee to consider.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22, attached as Appendix A to the report be approved, including the amended figures in paragraph 7.3.

6. MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE POLICY

The Head of Human Resources presented a revised Management of Change Policy which had been reviewed in line with Smarter Ways of Working principles and Hybrid Working requirements.

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He explained the main changes to the Policy, which were set out in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.12 of the report, and he responded to questions from members.

He confirmed that key stakeholders had been consulted on the proposed changes, and that the Trade Unions had agreed to the proposals following due consultation.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Management of Change Policy be approved.

7. DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2021/22

The Finance Manager reminded Members that the Committee's role was to review the draft 2021/22 Accounting Statement, taking into account any comments made by the Audit Committee and to suggest any amendments to the draft Statement before it was signed off by the Chairman of the Governance Committee.

The Finance Manager advised that the Audit Committee had considered the draft Accounting Statement in detail on 25th July 2022. He advised that the Audit Committee had not suggested any amendments or raised any significant issues when referring it to the Governance Committee.

Members of the Governance Committee noted that there would be an opportunity to review the final Accounting Statement in September 2022 following scrutiny by the Council's external auditor.

The Committee was advised of the revised timescale for completion of the draft accounts and expressed appreciation of the Finance Team's hard work in having completed this work ahead of the deadline.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Statement of Accounts 2021/22 be approved.

The meeting closed at 6.50 pm