

Audit, Governance and Standards Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee held on Wednesday 15 November 2023 at 7.30 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Barrie Hargrove (Chair)
Councillor John Batteson
Councillor Gavin Edwards
Councillor Hamish McCallum
Councillor Graham Neale
Councillor Andy Simmons

OFFICER SUPPORT: Clive Palfreyman, strategic director of finance
David Quirke-Thornton, strategic director of children's and adults' services
Doreen Forrester-Brown, assistant chief executive, governance and assurance
Alasdair Smith, director of children's services
Kate Bingham, senior finance consultant
Amarjit Uppal, chief accountant
Tim Jones, finance manager
Allan Wells, specialist governance lawyer
Aaron Winter, BDO
Angela Mason-Bell, BDO
Joanne Brown, Grant Thornton
Nick Halliwell, Grant Thornton
Virginia Wynn-Jones, constitutional team

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sarah King, from Desmond Vincent, assistant director of building safety, and from Nick Baker, BDO.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

The members present were confirmed as the voting members.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were none.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

5. MINUTES

The minutes of the audit, governance and standards committee of 6 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

6. GOVERNANCE CONVERSATION: CHILDREN'S AND ADULTS' SERVICES

David Quirke-Thornton, strategic director of children's and adults' services, addressed the committee. The committee had questions for the strategic director.

Officers undertook to bring a written update on the repairs service to a future meeting.

Members thanked the strategic director for attending the meeting.

7. RESPONSE TO INTERNAL AUDIT SCHOOLS SUMMARY REPORT 2022-23

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions for the officers.

Officers undertook to add an update report on this to the audit, governance and standards committee's 2024-25 workplan.

Officers undertook to circulate an update on the senior management team structure in children's and adults' services to all members.

Officers undertook to provide a briefing note on maintained nurseries to members of the audit, governance and standards committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee noted the report.

8. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WORK OF INTERNAL AUDIT: NOVEMBER 2023

BDO, the council's internal auditors, introduced the report. Members had questions for the internal auditors.

The internal auditors undertook to bring an update on the schools reports due in May 2023 and early June 2023.

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee noted the report.

9. ANTI-FRAUD PROGRESS REPORT NOVEMBER 2023

BDO, the council's internal auditors, introduced the report. Members had questions for the internal auditors.

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee noted the report.

10. WHISTLEBLOWING COMPLAINTS AND OUTCOMES

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions for the officers.

The committee thanked Allan Wells for his contributions and support, on his upcoming retirement.

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee noted the report.

11. 2022-23 EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

Grant Thornton, the council's external auditors, introduced the update. Members had questions for the auditors.

RESOLVED:

That the committee noted the audit progress report and sector update, and external audit plan for 2022-23 for the council and pension fund.

12. 2021-22 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS INCLUDING THE PENSION FUND AND AUDIT FINDINGS REPORT

Grant Thornton, the council's external auditors, introduced the report. Members had questions for the auditors.

Grant Thornton undertook to ensure the 2021-22 accounts were completed by end of December 2023, and the 2022-23 accounts by the end of March 2024.

RESOLVED:

That the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee:

- a. considered the matters raised in Grant Thornton's interim audit findings report for 2021-22 (appendix A of the report) before approval of the council's main accounts

- b. noted the adjustments to the main accounts as set out in pages 22-23 of the interim audit findings report (appendix A of the report)
- c. considered the matters raised in the Pension Fund audit findings report 2021-22 (appendix B of the report) prior to approval of the Pension Fund accounts
- d. noted the adjustments to the Pension Fund accounts as set out in page 14 of the audit findings report
- e. approved the Statement of Accounts 2021-22 (appendix C of the report), subject to any final changes required by the conclusion of the audit, being delegated to the strategic director of finance in consultation with the chair of audit, governance and standards committee
- f. delegated approval of letters of representation for the council and pension fund as required by Grant Thornton in order to conclude the audit of 2021-22 statement of accounts.
- g. agreed to receive a written update of any changes in the statement of accounts for the main accounts and pension fund at the next meeting of the committee for noting.

13. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024-25

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions of the officers.

RESOLVED:

That the Audit, Governance and Standards committee noted:

- a. The draft Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Strategy for 2024-25, and its appendices:
 - Appendix A - Capital Strategy 2024-25 - 2033-34
 - Appendix B - Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25
 - Appendix C - Annual Investment Management Strategy 2024-25
 - Appendix D - Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2024-25
 - Appendix E - Prudential Indicators 2024-27.
- b. The intention to include Green Bonds (Community Municipal Investments) as a source of debt financing in relation to climate-related activities (see Appendix B of the report).

14. INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF THE AUDIT, GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS (CIVIC AWARDS) SUB-COMMITTEE: RECOMMENDATIONS

Officers introduced the report. Members had questions for the officer.

RESOLVED:

That the committee:

1. noted the criteria set out in the report for inviting individuals to join the audit, governance and standards (civic awards) sub-committee ('the civic awards sub-committee') for evaluating nominations for the 2023 Civic Awards.
2. considered any recommendations they would have for individuals or groups to be invited to join the civic awards sub-committee.

Meeting ended at 9.00 pm

CHAIR:

DATED: