

Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee Meeting held on 26 April 2022

Present: Mike Worthington (Chairman)

Attendance

Carolyn Trowbridge (Vice-Chairman)	Phil Hewitt
Bernard Williams	Graham Hutton
Ann Edgeller	Bernard Peters
Richard Ford	Janice Silvester-Hall
Philippa Haden	Arshad Afsar

Also in attendance:

For all items – Deborah Harris (Interim Chief Internal Auditor)

For item no. 159 – Natalie Morrissey (Information Governance Manager)

For item no. 164 – Nicola Hope (Head of Service – Adoption and Kinship)

For item no. 166 – Tim Moss (Assistant Director for Education Strategy and Improvement)

For item no. 167 – Sarah Getley (Assistant Director for People)

Cherie Cuthbertson (Head of People Solutions)

Paul Timmins (Head of Procurement)

Apologies: Ian Wilkes

PART ONE

157. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

158. Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 March 2022

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

159. Annual Report on Information Governance

The Director of Corporate Services submitted the Annual Report on the County Council's compliance with legislation on Information Governance, particularly in relation to access to data and information, and the use of investigatory powers. Compliance was monitored by a range of national bodies.

Specific reference was made to cyber security risks and the increased focus on training for officers and members given the current international circumstances. In addition, user authentication requirements were being strengthened.

In response to members questions it was reported that homeworking by County Council staff had initially increased the need for attention to security issues but this had since levelled out with an audit of cyber security giving assurance that appropriate measures were in place.

RESOLVED – That the Annual Report on Information Governance be noted.

160. Proposed Internal Audit Strategy and Plan 2022/23

The County Treasurer presented the proposed Internal Audit Strategy and Plan for 2022/23 explaining that whilst it provided for 175 days' less audit activity than the previous Plan, he was satisfied that it was balanced, with proposed activity matching the resources available. Using a scoring system the highest risks facing the Council were prioritised.

The County Treasurer was seeking to recruit to vacancies in the audit team however this was against a backdrop of a national shortage of auditors with market rates increasing drastically. A reserve list of audit reviews was held and would be instigated if resources allowed.

Members asked for an example where risk management had been effective. In response to this, Internal Audit's time supporting projects such as the Highways Transformation Programme and other Projects were quoted as examples where risks were being effectively managed through early engagement with the Internal Audit Service.

RESOLVED – That the Internal Audit Strategy and Plan for 2022/23 be approved.

161. Forward Plan for the Audit and Standards Committee 2022/23

The County Treasurer submitted the Forward Plan setting out this Committees meeting schedule and provisional agenda contents for 2022/23.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be approved.

162. Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED – That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972 as indicated.

The Committee proceeded to consider the following items:

163. Exempt minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2022 (exemption paragraph 3)

164. Special Guardianship Payments - Progress Report (exemption paragraph 3)

165. Review of Joint Funding and Billing CCGs Continuing Healthcare - Progress Report (exemption paragraph 3)

166. Staffordshire Local Area SEND Re-Visit Inspection (exemption paragraph 3)

167. Agency Staffing Contracts Audit Review (exemption paragraph 3)

Chairman