

# Audit Committee Minutes

**Monday 25 October 2021**

*Note: This meeting was held as an informal, hybrid meeting. You can watch a recording of the meeting at: <https://youtu.be/i0S3lZSB6gg>*

## **PRESENT**

### **Committee members (attended in person)**

Councillor Iain Cassidy  
Councillor Rowan Ree  
Councillor Matt Thorley

### **Committee members (attended remotely)**

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson  
Councillor Alex Karmel

### **Officers**

Kim Smith, Chief Executive  
Emily Hill, Director of Finance  
Jacqui McShannon, Director of Children's Services  
David Abbott, Head of Governance

### **Guests**

Paul Dossett and Ellen Millington, Grant Thornton

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jonathan Caleb Landy.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **3. EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR YEAR ENDING MARCH 2021**

Emily Hill (Director of Finance) gave a short introduction to the item, then Paul Dossett and Ellen Millington (Grant Thornton) presented the external audit plan. Ellen Millington highlighted key areas of the plan, including the new Code of Audit Practice which would come into effect from audit year 2020/21. The code introduced a revised approach to Value for Money (VfM) involving more extensive reporting and commentary.

Councillor Rowan Ree asked for more detail on the VfM methodology. Paul Dossett said the new code was required auditors to produce commentary on financial sustainability, governance, and economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Auditors were required to assess the Council's processes and arrangements that were in place to maximise value. It would be a separate report that would ultimately go to Full Council.

Councillor Ree asked the auditors if they were confident they had the resources to complete the audit with the current level of fees. Paul Dossett said they were.

Councillor Ree asked for reassurances that the auditors would meet the proposed timetable. Paul Dossett said the audit should be complete by the end of February.

Councillor Karmel asked for reassurances around the rigour of the audit processes given the majority of staff were working from home due to the pandemic. He also asked if property valuations would be distorted by the recent stamp duty holiday. Paul Dossett said remote working had been a real challenge for the audit profession and had slowed the process due to the complexities of remote working. But the relationship with officers had been very positive, and the audit was no less thorough for being remote. In the future he expected audit work to be done partly remotely and partly in person. He added that the Council's officers had been very helpful and had facilitated face-to-face sessions where needed and within the relevant Covid-19 guidelines. Regarding asset valuations, Paul Dossett explained that was a specialist area and the Council had valuers who would take the impact of the stamp duty holiday into account. Grant Thornton also had their own valuer who would assess those assessments and would challenge the judgements made by the Council in that area.

Kim Smith (Chief Executive) addressed the committee and said officers had done a remarkable job working from home and audit work was being completed to the same standards and with the same level of probity.

The Chair thanked officers and Paul Dossett and Ellen Millington from Grant Thornton for their time.

## **RESOLVED**

The Committee noted the External Audit Plan for the year ending 31 March 2021.

## **4. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting: 14 December 2021

Meeting started: 6.30 pm  
Meeting ended: 6.58 pm

**Chair** .....

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