

Runnymede Borough CouncilSTANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE30 January 2018 at 7.30pm

Members of the Committee Present: Councillors M G Nuti (Chairman) J Broadhead (Vice-Chairman)
A Alderson, D E Anderson-Bassey, J R Furey, Mrs Y P Lay, P S Sohi
and A P Tollett.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors R J Edis, S M Mackay, Mr J Healy and Mr M Litvak
(Independent persons)

493 FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Chairman read the procedures to be followed in the event of fire or other emergency.

494 NOTIFICATION OF CHANGE TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Group mentioned below had notified the Chief Executive of their wish that the change listed below be made to the membership of the Committee. The change was for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillor removed would be reappointed.

<u>Group</u>	<u>Remove From Membership</u>	<u>Appoint Instead</u>
Conservative	Councillor N Wase-Rogers	Councillor P S Sohi

The Chief Executive had given effect to this request in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

495 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 November 2017 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

496 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the two independent persons, there being no relevant items on the agenda.

497 INTERNAL AUDIT FOLLOW UP ON OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 2016/17

The Committee reviewed progress made with the implementation of 13 outstanding recommendations from completed audits in 2016/17.

TIAA reported that since the last meeting in November 2017, 4 recommendations had been implemented, a further 7 were in the process of being. One audit recommendation had been subject to a revised target date and another had not yet reached its implementation date.

Members considered follow up reports containing Audit observations on recommendations that had not yet been fully implemented. These concerned stock control at the Depot, contracts in Housing Repairs and Maintenance, Commercial rents, Housing rents, Business Rates, Council Tax and Benefits.

The Committee looked through each detailed report in turn and expressed concern with those in respect of the DSO, Commercial rents and Housing Repairs and Maintenance asking for the priority rating to be made more urgent.

Members asked for the monetary value to be attached to audit findings and a more truncated timescale for recommendations to be implemented and followed up if not implemented. It was agreed that awareness of contract values would help identify the level of risk to the authority which Members considered was an important part of the Committee's remit.

There was a discussion regarding stock control at the Depot. An issue regarding the delivery of food caddies would be raised directly with the relevant Director the following day.

Officers advised that they would be discussing stock control issues at the DSO shortly with particular regard to accounting for the storage of and delivery to households of refuse and recycling containers. This would form part of the DSO review of administrative and financial processes which was being conducted. The findings would be reported to the Environment and Sustainability and Corporate Management Committees.

There was some debate about charging for replacement bins. It was agreed that charging was not in keeping with the County-wide aim to reduce fly tipping and encourage recycling. It was thought the cost was minimal but Officers in Environmental Services would be asked to confirm the cost to RBC of replacement refuse and recycling bins compared with that of installing CCTV to monitor bins at the Depot.

Officers were asked to confirm the value of the Housing maintenance contracts listed in the Audit Observation, as reported to the Housing Committee. Members were concerned that repairs and maintenance should be conducted in a timely manner to avoid Housing tenants experiencing unnecessary delays. The boiler maintenance contract was specifically mentioned.

With regard to Commercial rents, the Committee expressed disappointment with the length of time it appeared to be taking to resolve the issues identified at a previous meeting of the Committee. Officers advised that monthly meetings were taking place and the management of property had improved over the last 12 months. There was a dedicated resource to ensuring the Council's property records were in order and this was working well.

Officers were asked to examine the merits of a more centralised project management approach and project plan which could quantify system issues, data cleansing and migration timescales and resources needed to co-ordinate commercial Rent Reviews with a view to a more timely resolution of outstanding issues. Alternative software solutions were being considered to achieve this.

Officers were instructed to submit a full progress report to the next meeting of the Committee and the Priority for implementation was raised from 2 to 1.

Officers outlined the recent Resources Business Centre restructure which had been reported to Corporate Management Committee. Members considered that with the new structure in place by May 2018 the implementation of new processes and a move to being paperless could be achieved earlier than anticipated.

Officers assured the Committee that collection rates were still 99% and that the net loss of 4 posts was not an issue because the new structure focussed on systems. Officers stated that staffing resources had been improved and made more resilient to support the new processes, refocussing on Recovery.

498 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2017/18

The Committee noted progress with the 2017/18 Audit programme.

Members attention was drawn to the Whistleblowing Incident which had been the subject of a previous special meeting. The Committee was advised that although there were checks and balances in place, circumstances had indicated that an Audit Review was necessary. Members expressed concern as they had understood the matter to be resolved.

The Chairman noted that TIAA's Audit Review was likely to be with the Director of Resources the following day. Members agreed the report should be presented to the next meeting of the Committee, or to a special meeting, if TIAA had raised further issues of concern.

Members noted that the ICT Member's replacement IT Audit planned for Quarter 3 of 2017/18 had been replaced by one on GDPR in Quarter 4.

Members reviewed the Priority 1 and 2 Recommendations on Procurement and Absence Management and requested that these be given a higher level of urgency and scrutiny. Members sought evidence of enforcement of Audit's recommendations and were assured these would be followed up by TIAA. Members requested details of the cost to RBC of sickness absence and how was it being addressed. Members asked for statistics on sickness absence. Officers responded that the Head of HR would be asked to supply this information and the matter could be referred to the HR Member Working Group.

With regard to Procurement, Officers explained that currently compliance was a delegated matter and Officers in Procurement performed an advisory rather than a management role. However, from April 2018 when the new centralised team was formed contract compliance and Procurement generally would be more actively enforced.

The Committee was content to note the Audit reports concerning Accounts payable and Payroll.

499 INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGIC PLAN 2018/19 TO 2020/21 AND AUDIT PROGRAMME 2018/19 (8.35pm)

TIAA introduced the Strategic Plan and presented the audit Programme for 2018/19 for approval. The Committee's attention was drawn to the summary on pages 43 – 45 of Appendix 'D'.

It was agreed to bring forward, at the Committee's request, the Housing Repair and Maintenance Assurance Audit from 2019/20 to 2018/19.

TIAA agreed to provide more background information and indications of financial impact in their audit reporting.

RESOLVED that –

The Audit Programme for 2018/19, as amended and the three year Audit Strategy for 2018/19 – 2020/21 be approved.

500 COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS 1 NOVEMBER – 31 DECEMBER 2017

The Committee noted the complaints and compliments that had been recorded centrally since June 2017 when the new registers were introduced. For the latest recording period a cut off date of 31 December 2017 had been applied. Since the last meeting Officers reported that 12 complaints and 8 compliments had been recorded by those Officers designated to do so by their Chief Officers. A reminder had been issued and a slightly wider pool of recording Officers established for greater resilience. Officers gave examples of good practice for each business centre, particularly Housing, where one Officer co-ordinated the process to feed in to the register which worked well.

It was noted that of the 12 complaints received (a breakdown by business centre was presented in the report), 3 had been upheld, 1 partly upheld, 4 not upheld and the remaining 4 were still being dealt with because they related to mainly Planning and Housing which tended to be more complex.

Members asked for details of the complaints that had been upheld or partly so and this was provided with reference to the registers.

The Committee noted that Officers had been told that the Customer Services Standard was likely to go live early in the new financial year. It was agreed that the decision made by CLT to reduce the response time for complaints from 10 down to 5 working days would be challenging. New procedures had been agreed to accommodate this with the Corporate Head of Law and Governance.

It was noted that in terms of Equalities one complaint had been identified as relevant to a protected characteristic and that Officers had made every effort to resolve the matter but no response had been received from the complainant to pursue it further.

The Committee was pleased to note that Officers considered that reporting was much improved and was a useful feedback tool for business centres to either learn from mistakes or share best practice. It was agreed that it would be useful to provide an update on trends and patterns etc, at the September meeting when the registers had been operational for a full year.

501 ADDLESTONE ONE RISK REGISTER

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

Officers reported that matters with Bouygues were reaching a conclusion. It was hoped outstanding issues would be resolved shortly.

Despite some fluctuations in the market, Officers remained confident that all the retail units would be let in a timely manner. However, the Committee was disappointed to learn that owing to construction timings in the development the project completion date had slipped, but was still within the overall timescale.

On the residential side, a good percentage of sales and lettings had been completed. Officers informed the Committee that a new car parking strategy was being devised.

The Committee requested that a full progress report be presented to the next meeting as Members were keen to actively audit the programme of this high profile project.

Chairman

(The meeting finished at 9.11 pm)