

Runnymede Borough CouncilSTANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE27 November 2018 at 7.30pm

Members of the Committee Present: Councillors M G Nuti (Chairman), D E Anderson-Bassey (Vice-Chairman), A Alderson, M D Cressey, S L Dennett, Mrs Y P Lay, S A Lewis, P Snow, P J Taylor, and A P Tollett.

Members of the Committee absent: Mr J Healy and Mr M Litvak (Independent persons)

380 FIRE PRECAUTIONS

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

381 NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES 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 J R Furey | Councillor S A Lewis |

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

382 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 18 September and the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee held on 24 September 2018 were confirmed and signed as correct records.

383 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no items of business for the Independent persons.

384 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2018/19

The Committee noted progress with the audits being conducted in 2018/19. There were three changes to the planned programme for the year. These were an additional audit to examine Section 106 agreements and two deleted audits in ICT which were not considered a priority.

Although Members were content that the two ICT related audits had been deleted they did, as a result of the discussion regarding systems and processes, request TIAA to consider bringing forward the ICT Change Management and Control audit currently planned for quarter 4 of 2018/19. Members generally welcomed the

Members' ICT support role coming back in house provided equipment and email facilities were set up in a timely fashion after the elections in May 2019. Members noted that IT equipment and software for Councillors was currently being discussed by the relevant Member Working Group and recommendations would be brought forward to Corporate Management Committee in due course.

Officers from TIAA assured Members that they would present their annual report on outstanding reports and recommendations to the meeting in January 2019.

It was confirmed that an audit of Housing and Planning Enforcement was in the programme as soon as dates could be agreed with the respective service heads. The Committee agreed that Planning Enforcement had improved with regular updates to the Planning Committee. There would also be forthcoming audits on the Local Plan and Addlestone One in the new year. The latter to include the requested for 'lessons learned' element.

385 CORPORATE FRAUD AND FINANCIAL INVESTIGATIONS

The Committee's endorsement was sought of a proposal to work in partnership with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council on fraud investigation. This would be subject to the approval of Corporate Management Committee at a later date, possibly the January 2019 meeting.

Members noted that in 2014 the responsibility for the investigation of Housing Benefit fraud transferred to the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP). At that time, recognising the need to investigate fraud in other areas, the Fraud Investigator's post had been retained and funded by the Council. The background to the current proposal was explained; namely an increase in potential fraud across Resources and Housing related matters and that the current post holder had been very successful at identifying potential fraud at an early stage, undertaking the investigation work, through to securing a significant number of positive outcomes for the Council and the County Council, although Officers confirmed that the new arrangements would remain outcome focussed on raising income for the Council. The aim was that the post would become self-financing following an initial outlay of approximately £40,000.

As well as investigation the work involved fraud prevention, reactive fraud referrals and financial investigations all of which was undertaken using clear frameworks and software systems.

Officers had discussed the potential for partnership working with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, whose staffing resources were greater and an indication of their success rate was noted. By entering into a more formal relationship, for which a service level agreement would be required, there would be support for the current post holder and a modest estimate of additional income of £290k in 2019/20

The proposal was welcomed by the Committee who were pleased to recommend its approval by Corporate Management Committee.

RESOLVED that –

the proposal to work in partnership with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council with regard to Fraud Investigation be endorsed and recommend that the Business Case be approved by Corporate Management Committee in January 2019, as part of the budget setting process for 2019/20

386 COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS 1 AUGUST – 30 SEPTEMBER 2018

The Committee received its regular report on Complaints and Compliments that had been recorded centrally with the Corporate Head of Law and Governance since the last meeting up to 30 September 2018. The report also addressed some requests and issues raised at the previous meeting.

Members were informed that there had been 27 formal complaints recorded and 15 compliments between 1 August and 30 September 2018, 7 of those compliments were for the Green Space team in Community Development. It was noted that 7 complaints had been upheld or partly so.

Members received some more detailed information regarding the nature of complaints received by Environmental Services, Housing and Planning during 2017/18 as requested at the last meeting. These were provided as an Exempt Appendix and all personal information that could identify individual complainants had been redacted to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation. The snapshot highlighted the number of overdue complaints which would be followed up with relevant Service Heads but that each service area had a fairly even share of complaints. To identify trends, Officers had grouped those complaints into six themes (staff, contractors, Council policy and decisions, service delays and standards, another appeal process was in place and complaints outside our remit) and invited comment from the relevant Business Centres. It was reported that the Housing Business Centre had taken an especial interest in looking at trends to improve performance.

Officers confirmed that as requested the figures would be aligned to the same reporting periods as the corporate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) from the next meeting. It was reported that Officers had also added targets for complaints to the quarterly KPI reports for those Service Committees that did not currently do so.

The Committee noted that there were currently 12 complaints marked as overdue on the register and that these were being actively followed up to 'sign them off' as dealt with. Members sought some more analysis in this area to track whether complaints were always being responded to and dealt with in a timely matter.

Members noted that both Planning and Housing had the most complaints recorded. Officers agreed to advise the Committee when the report on the Review of the Planning Service would be available to all Members.

Officers were thanked for producing a detailed and informative report and it was debated what other information Members would like and in what detail. It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer and the Officer overseeing the complaints register would liaise with Cllr Anderson-Bassey and Cllr Cressey regarding tracking the performance of responding to complaints and other information sought with regard to more in depth analysis and 'snapshots' of the register and report back to the next meeting, resources permitting.

387 ADDLESTONE ONE RISK REGISTER – UPDATE

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 paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

The Director of Commercial Services appraised the Committee of the present position with regard to retail and residential units in Addlestone One. As well as a detailed account, a pictorial update was tabled at the meeting which Members noted contained sensitive commercial information.

With regard to risks, Officers confirmed these had been reduced to a very small number which it was advised were manageable. Officers were asked to consider adding a column to the risk register to reflect any slippage in the project.

The Committee noted the importance of advertising and marketing and Officers agreed to look at providing a link from the RBCi website to the relevant property agent sites to promote sales and lettings of residential units in Addlestone One.

Officers agreed to discuss with Cllr Mrs Lay some issues raised regarding the Waitrose Car park in Egham.

In closing the meeting, the Chairman announced that the planned for second part of the audit training would take place immediately before the next scheduled meeting and Officers were asked to circulate the slides in advance.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.21 pm)