

Runnymede Borough CouncilSTANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE24 November 2020 at 7.30pm on MS Teams

Members of the Committee Present: J Sohi (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), M Adams, M Cressey, R Edis, L Gillham, M Harnden, M Kusneraitis and J Wilson

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors D Anderson-Bassey and M Nuti (Chairman)

Councillor J Olorenshaw also attended.

325 NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Group mentioned below had notified the Chief Executive of its 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</u>	<u>Appoint instead</u>
Runnymede Independent Residents' Group	Cllr B Clarke	Cllr L Gillham

The Chief Executive had given effect to the change to Committee membership in accordance with section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

326 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 September 2020 were confirmed as a correct record, which would be signed when the Chairman was physically able to.

327 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Nuti (Chairman) and D Anderson-Bassey.

328 INTERNAL AUDIT SUMMARY INTERNAL CONTROLS ASSURANCE (SICA) REPORT 2020/2021

The Committee reviewed progress with the annual audit programme for 2020/2021.

TIAA's Audit Director advised that in respect of governance, risk and internal control related issues specifically relating to Covid 19, the Council was currently in the 'Relaxing Lockdown' phase where there was a significant element of retrospective governance and control issues and in terms of risk management it was assessed that the Council was in Business Recovery. However, with continued uncertainty, the need for continuous risk assessments about strategic and operational matters was a prudent exercise to be undertaken.

Since the last meeting of the Committee 3 audits had been completed; these were for Data Protection, the Local Plan follow up audit and Safeguarding/Prevent. There had been no priority 1 recommendations and Members noted the priority 2 recommendations in respect of Data Protection and Safeguarding/Prevent. There were two management comments which the Committee asked TIAA to follow up with the Head of HR and return to the next Committee with a revised statement that gave greater re-assurance of control mechanisms to ensure former staff email addresses were removed from outlook and compliance with undertaking mandatory training. It was suggested that there was the potential for the latter using an existing method that had assisted with training on Data Protection and Information Security.

Officers advised that the section on 'root cause indicators' would be completed and reported to the next scheduled meeting in January 2021.

The Committee noted that from the plan two further reports had been finalised on Payroll and Community Transport and owing to TIAA's relevant Officers being able to devote more time to Runnymede, good progress had been made with other audits to mitigate the impact of Covid 19.

329 **INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT FOR OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee noted that extensions to meet revised target deadlines had been agreed about Business Continuity, Freedom of Information, GDPR, Housing Enforcement, ICT (Digital Services), Section 106 and Services Desk. In all there were 13 outstanding recommendations. Although key Officers had been diverted from their normal duties during Covid 19, Officers were instructed to confirm what progress had been made with the DSO Risk Register which was outstanding since 2017 and requested TIAA to report an update on this and any that had passed the December deadline at the next scheduled meeting in January 2021.

Members were advised that recommendations regarding Day Centres had been superseded by new procedures, and those relating to Sheltered Accommodation had been implemented.

330 **COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS – QUARTER 2 2020/2021**

The Committee reviewed statistics and analysis of 35 complaints and 43 compliments for Quarter 2 of 2020/2021 from July to September. These were presented in the detail and format as requested by Members to give them a sound overview of feedback from residents and the wider community in Runnymede.

Officers reported that since the last meeting the Council's complaints procedures had been updated, specifically, by slightly amending the approved definition of a complaint, to emphasise that we aim to address all matters that require a response and that we do consider complaints about all services whether provided by the Council directly or on its behalf.

Members agreed it was disappointing that in terms of complaints the figures were back to pre-covid levels but that this should be balanced firstly against the positive number of compliments and secondly that staff were under significant pressure faced with the Covid response that had diverted them from their normal duties, or in a lot of cases carrying on with the normal duties as well as assisting vulnerable residents. It was agreed that the Communications team would be asked to issue a message to

reassure residents that complaints were being dealt with appropriately and in a timely way throughout the current pandemic with limited resources.

Seven complaints were upheld and the lessons learned from this were the importance of dealing with service requests in a timely manner, the need for some refresher training in customer care, taking a more pro-active approach to chase contractors and focussing on the impact that an issue has on different individuals.

There were seven complaints overdue; all regarding refuse and recycling, but in the current climate, Members appreciated that relevant staff were busy responding to increased pressures and demands.

The Committee was very pleased by the 43 compliments received in quarter 2, noting that 18 were for Environmental Services including refuse and recycling and 15 for Community Development, 13 of which were for individuals in the Cemeteries team. To comply with Data Protection the full details were included in the exempt Appendix to the report.

The Committee asked Officers to consider how individuals might be formally recognised for their achievements, particularly those who had assisted with the Covid response or had been named in the various reports to the Committee. The staff newsletter was mentioned as was a Mayoral event, at a later date, when it was safe to do so or some other form of incentive scheme that Members might wish to be involved in. These ideas would be discussed with the Chief Executive.

The Committee was asked for a steer on future work. It was agreed not to publish league table on the website at this time but to undertake further research and report back to a future meeting of the Committee.

Members noted that a full report on the Council's progress with implementation of the Local Government Ethical Standards Best Practice Recommendations would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee. Officers confirmed that 2 recommendations had already been implemented as had the obligation to update the Cabinet Office accordingly.

Officers were thanked for their report.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.11 pm)