

Runnymede Borough Council

Standards and Audit Committee

Tuesday, 24 January 2023 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors M Nuti (Chairman), J Broadhead (Vice-Chairman), A Berardi, D Cotty, J Hulley, J Olorenshaw, S Walsh and S Williams.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors L Gillham and S Ringham.

In attendance: Councillors M Cressey.

472 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2022 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

473 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gillham and Ringham.

474 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

475 External Audit Update

The Council's External Auditors, BDO, were invited to provide an update on the as yet to be completed external audit of the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2019/2020.

Members were advised that BDO had sought details of the external Counsel's Legal advice the Council had received in respect of the acquisition of a particular property. This would assist completion of the Value for Money conclusion which was the only outstanding area. Officers from BDO had received the necessary information and anticipated being in a position to complete this audit in the next 4 to 6 weeks.

BDO had started preparatory work for the 2020/2021 audit but not for 2021/2022. It was appreciated that a combination of staff availability and the complexity of the work around commercial activity had presented significant challenges.

An update would be reported to the next scheduled meeting in May 2023.

476 Summary Internal Controls Assurance Report

Officers from TIAA presented their latest Summary Internal Controls Assurance Report for information.

The Committee was advised that since the last meeting the two ICT related audits from the 2021/2022 programme were now in draft form and management comments were awaited. As there were a number of priority 2 recommendations, these would be reported to the next scheduled meeting in May 2023.

Two audits from the 2022/2023 programme were complete. These were Housing Health and Safety and Gifts and Hospitality. Neither had attracted any priority 1 or 2

recommendations.

An additional audit for Safeguarding replaced the cancelled Leisure related audit. Fieldwork was in progress for 10 audits and Budgetary Control had reached the final stage.

Members queried the deferment of the Procurement, Commercial Property and ICT – Virtual/cloud based approach to DR audits. It was agreed that in the interests of transparency, where there were going to be deferrals and cancellations, Officers would consult the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee prior to such actions if it was not possible to report the matter to a meeting of the Committee for a decision.

TIAA were drafting an annual audit programme for 2023/2024 and finalising their annual assurance report for the next meeting in May. Suggestions on areas that the Committee wished to see audited were welcomed.

A briefing note on fake invoices in circulation for payment of office supplies had been circulated to staff with access to Total Finance.

477 **Internal Audit Progress Report for outstanding Recommendations**

The Committee was provided with an update on the 4 outstanding recommendations from previous audits.

Officers reported that one outstanding recommendation had been implemented, leaving Business Continuity, Mobile Device Security Management, and two for Procurement. It was anticipated that a revised implementation date for Business Continuity was imminent. Policies regarding Mobile Devices would be presented to the next meeting of the Communications and Service Transformation Member Working Party in February 2023. With regard to Procurement, Officers advised that problems with recruiting a permanent Procurement Officer had resulted in a delay producing a new Procurement Strategy. The post of Procurement Manager was going to be advertised shortly and a draft strategy was in the process of being drawn up but would need to reflect the longer term service strategy and the Procurement Bill which was currently going through Parliament. A revised implementation date of 31 March 2023 for the audit recommendations was noted.

478 **Complaints and Compliments Quarter 3 2022/2023**

The Committee noted a summary of complaints and compliments received during Quarter 3 of 2022/2023.

Members were advised that there were 24 entries in the Complaints register and 17 compliments. This was three more complaints than the written report as unfortunately these had been sent to the relevant business centre and not entered onto the register until Officers had been copied into the replies. This problem had been resolved.

The majority of complaints had not been upheld as proper procedures had been followed. Those that had been upheld had satisfactory remedies such as bringing forward some property improvements. Multiple missed bin collections continued to feature.

The Committee reviewed the compliments, noting that the same people tended to appear, maintaining high standards of customer care in often difficult circumstances. Officers would send certificates to relevant staff after the meeting.

In line with the document retention schedule the register entries that were over 4 years old (complaints) and 2 years (compliments) had been deleted.

479 Procurement of Internal Audit Services

The Committee noted that a confidential report had been made to the Corporate Management Committee who had approved the procurement route to re-tender for Internal Audit Services. The value of the contract had necessitated this approach.

Officers advised that Internal Audit was a statutory requirement in local government. It was a key service, acting as a critical friend to ensure the Council's systems were robust and accountable.

Members noted TIAA's intention to bid alongside other external providers and agreed that it was prudent to test the market.

A budget had been approved and Officers confirmed they would submit a report should that change.

The legal implications were noted; including that the proposed procurement route complied with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

An update would be reported at a future meeting.

Chairman's Announcement

Members were asked to note that a presentation/training on Fraud would be delivered to a future meeting of the Committee.

480 Exclusion of Press and Public

There were no press or public present. Positive comments were made in respect of staff receiving compliments in Quarter 3 of 2022/2023 who would be written to on behalf of the Committee.

(The meeting ended at 8.15 pm.)

Chairman