

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting: Tuesday, 7th December, 2021
at 10.00 am. (Banqueting Hall)

Present: Councillors Burns (Chairman), Assouad (Vice-Chair), Callister and Shirley.

Officers Present: Susan Roberts (Director of Resources), Debbie Storr (Head of Legal and Governance & Monitoring Officer) and Katie Pepper (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer).

33 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Nott.

34 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30th September, 2021 were taken as read and confirmed.

35 Public Participation

RESOLVED:- To note that no questions, representations, deputations or petitions had been received in respect of the meeting.

36 Audit and Governance Committee Work Plan

The Director of Resources submitted a report outlining the Audit and Governance Work Plan for 2021-2022, a copy of which had been appended to the report. The Work Plan sets out the business of the Audit and Governance Committee to provide a forward plan and to demonstrate that the terms of reference had been covered.

There had been several revisions, many of which had been driven by the annual audit which was ongoing and not yet concluded:

- 17. Annual Governance Statement
- 20. Statement of Accounts and Letter of Representation
- 21. Audit Findings Report

An additional Audit and Governance Committee would be scheduled to receive the closure of the annual audit.

Items 2. and 5. (Final Reports and Progress) from Internal Audit had been deferred to the next meeting; this had been currently allocated to the additional meeting and would be kept under review.

Item 15. (Risk Management) had not been included on the agenda as there had been no changes to the report.

Item 18. (Restricted Assurance) had not been included on the agenda. At the Audit and Governance Committee of the 30th September 2021, action to address the Priority One recommendation had been allocated to the Head of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer).

This would be the subject of a report, added to the Work Plan as Item 29.

RESOLVED:- To note the Work Plan for 2021-2022.

REFERRED ITEM

THE FOLLOWING MATTERS ARE REFERRED TO COUNCIL FOR DECISION

37 Appointment of External Auditors

The Director of Resources had submitted a report setting out proposals for appointing the External Auditor to the Council for the accounts for the five-year period from 2023-2024.

Vesting Day for Westmorland and Furness Council would be 1st April 2023, and the Cumbria Chief Finance Officers would all be recommending to opt into the national scheme for auditor appointments managed by Public Sector Audit Appointments as the 'Appointing Person'.

RESOLVED:- To recommend the Council to:-

1. Accept the Public Sector Audit Appointments Invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of External Auditors to principal Local Government and Police bodies for five financial years from 1st April 2023; and
2. Authorise the Section 151 Officer to sign the Public Sector Audit Appointments' notice of acceptance on behalf of the Council.

38 Code of Conduct and Guidance Revision

The Monitoring Officer reported that at the previous meeting of the Committee, Members had considered a review of standards arrangements and had received an update with regard to the model LGA Code of Conduct which had been considered by the Cumbria Monitoring Officers Group. It had been requested that a report be brought back to the meeting with the amended version of the code and revised guidance for final consideration ahead of recommendation to full Council.

The Model Code of Conduct with suggested amendments had been included as an appendix to the report. The amendments had been shown via tracked changes to make it easier for Members to see where the suggestions had been made to the LGA Model Code of Conduct.

Since the LGA Code had been published, a revised version had been issued in July 2021 and the tweaks had been incorporated into the latest version. Members had been requested to confirm whether they wished to see unpaid directorships added to the other registrable interests which the Council had said should be declared. The Monitoring Officer advised that if Members agreed that those should be included, then they would be incorporated into the recommendations for full Council.

RESOLVED:- To recommend the Council to:-

1. Adopt the LGA Code of Conduct (as amended) as attached to the report;

Tuesday, 7th December, 2021

2. Agree that the registration of 'Other Registerable Interests' include 'unpaid directorships'; and
3. That subject to the revised Code being adopted that the guidance be revised as set out in the report.

The meeting closed at 10.13 am.