

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

| |
|--|
| AUDIT COMMITTEE 25 JANUARY 2022 |
|--|

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON
TUESDAY, 25 JANUARY 2022 AT 1400 HOURS IN COMMITTEE
ROOM C, COUNCIL HOUSE EXTENSION, 6 MARGARET ST,
BIRMINGHAM**

PRESENT:-

Councillor Grindrod in the Chair;

Councillors Bore, Bridle, Morrall, and Tilsley

NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

- 406 The Chair advised and the meeting noted that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's You Tube site (www.youtube.com/channel/UCT2kT7ZRPFCXq6_5dnVnYlw) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

The business of the meeting and all discussions in relation to individual reports was available for public inspection via the web-stream.

APOLOGIES

- 407 Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Akhtar, Jenkins and Quinnen for their inability to attend the meeting.

The Chair also noted that he had received an apology from the Cabinet Member Vulnerable Children's and Families Councillor Sharon Thompson who had been attending for the assurance session at agenda item No. 6 which was now withdrawn.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 408 Members were reminded that they must declare all relevant pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests relating to any items of business to be discussed at this meeting. If a pecuniary interest was declared a Member must not speak or take part in that agenda item. Any declarations would be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
-

EXEMPT INFORMATION – POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

- 408 The Chair noted that there were no private items on the agenda and he indicated that he did not believe that the meeting would need to go in to private session.
-

MINUTES – AUDIT COMMITTEE – 29 NOVEMBER 2021

- 409 The Chair noted that the minutes of the last meeting were not yet available for confirmation and signing.
-

ASSURANCE SESSION - CABINET MEMBER VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S AND FAMILIES PORTFOLIO

- 410 Item deferred to the next meeting.
-

AUDIT FINDINGS REPORT 2019/20 - RECOMMENDATIONS UPDATE

The following report of the Director of Council Management was submitted: -

(See document No.1)

Officers spoke to the report and responded to questions from Members of the Committee.

Upon consideration, it was:

- 411 **RESOLVED:-**

That the updates on progress in implementing actions to meet the recommendations of the External Auditor's Audit Findings Report 2020/21 be noted.

EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S FINDINGS REPORT 2020/21

The following report of the External Auditors was submitted: -

(See document No.2)

Jon Roberts and Laurelin Griffiths of Grant Thornton, External Auditors, gave a detailed introduction of the report noting that the Audit was ongoing and in order

to bring the most up to date information the report had been circulated late. They then responded to Members questions.

Councillor Bore referring to the paragraphs on page 10 of the report sought clarification of them and suggested that a written explanation should be provided to the Committee in future. Officers responded. The Chair asked if a written response could be made to a future meeting.

Following comments from Councillor Morrall about the need for the A38 highway improvements to be completed before the Commonwealth Games so that there is not a risk associated with the Games, the Chair noted that he had received a letter from Councillors Jenkins and Morrall on the matter and was seeking advice from the City Solicitor which would be brought back to the Committee. It was agreed that the letter could be forwarded to the External Auditor

412

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the report from the External Auditors be noted; and
- (ii) That the Managing Director Housing report on the valuation of Tower blocks in the City Housing stock.

OMBUDSMAN REPORT CONCERNING A COMPLAINT ABOUT THE REFUSE AND RECYCLING SERVICE

The following report of the Director of the City Operations Directorate was submitted: -

(See document No.3)

Darren Share, Assistant Director Street Scene, made introductory comments relating to the report and responded to questions from Members.

Members of the Committee gave examples where departments worked in silos and noted that this was not acceptable.

The Chair noted that residents had received a poor service and he was concerned about the passing of blame between departments. He was frustrated to hear that, particularly as it was not the first time that the Committee had come across that issue. He suggested that the Committee request the Chief Executive to review how departments work in a joined-up way and how complaints from residents and Councillors on poor service are dealt with. The first officer/department receiving the complaint should ensure it is dealt with even if another department is involved.

Upon consideration, it was:

413

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the Director of City Operation's response to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's recommendations be noted; and
- (ii) That the Chief Executive review how departments work in a joined-up way and how complaints from residents and Councillors on poor service are dealt with.

RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The following report of the Assistant Director - Audit & Risk Management was submitted: -

(See document No.4)

Sarah Dunlavey Assistant Director, Audit & Risk Management, made introductory comments relating to the report and responded to questions from Members.

Officers responded to a comment from the Chair that SR 5.6 Safeguarding Children should be in the top box. The Chair indicated that as the matter of safeguarding children had come before Committee on several occasions, he felt that where and why safeguarding children was on the strategic risk map in a particular place should be raised at a future meeting with the Cabinet Member and officers.

Upon consideration, it was:

414

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the progress in implementing the Risk Management Framework and the assurance and oversight provided by the Council Leadership Team (CLT) be noted;
 - (ii) That the Committee have reviewed the strategic risks and assessed whether further explanation/information is required from risk owners in order to satisfy itself that the Risk Management Framework has been consistently applied; and
 - (iii) That the SR5.6 Safeguarding Children risk position on the strategic risk map be raised with the Cabinet Member and officers at a future meeting.
-

SCHEDULE OF OUTSTANDING MINUTES

The following Schedule of Outstanding Minutes was submitted:-

(See document No.5)

- 415 The Chair noted that the Schedule of Outstanding Minutes had not been updated since the last meeting but noted that Outstanding Minutes 334, 335, 364, 365, 379 and parts (ii) and (ix) of 381 were discharged at the last meeting.
-

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

- 416 The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 15 February 2022 at 1400 hours in Committee Room C, Council House Extension, Margaret Street.
-

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

- 417 Councillor Bore felt that Committee Room C was a more suitable room than the Main Hall at the BMI and he queried why Committee Room C had not used from the onset. The Chair reported that Council Business Management Committee was pushing for the best possible rooms available to be used for meetings. He added that, subject to the situation with the Covid Pandemic continuing to improve, he would like to see more officer attend the meeting face to face in future.
-

AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

- 418 **RESOLVED:-**

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 1531 hours.

.....
CHAIR