

Minutes of the Audit Committee

5 October 2021

-: Present :-

Councillor Loxton (Chairman)

Councillors Douglas-Dunbar, Hill, Kennedy (Vice-Chair) and O'Dwyer

257. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brooks and Johns.

258. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 July 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

259. Corporate Performance and Corporate Risk Register - Quarter 1

The Audit Committee considered a high level report that been designed and produced with a series of key performance indicators and high scoring risks which align to the visions of the Community and Corporate Plan, and outlined how well the Council was performing against these key priorities. The report enabled the Senior Leadership Team, Cabinet Members and the Audit Committee to review and challenge the Council's performance on a regular basis and to identify any improvement actions that may be required.

The Committee noted that performance information and reporting was evolving with a new format coming forward for Quarter 2, which would include a narrative on progress that had been made against each vision. These would be drafted by Directors who were leading on overseeing the delivery of the Community and Corporate Plan. The report would also be simplified in terms of how it currently reports on projects, focussing on what had been delivered. There would be a new column containing a traffic light system to show how each project was progressing; concern, on track or completed. Officers were also exploring the timeliness of reporting and how it fits with the Democratic process.

The Committee challenged the performance in respect of the following areas:

- Agency staffing levels;
- Capacity of staff and the Local Government Association Corporate Health Check Action Plan;
- Inter-departmental communications and Customer Relationship Management System (CRM);

- Delay to the budget setting process for 2022/2023;
- Freedom of Information (FOI) and Subject Access Requests (SARs);
- Improvements to the Planning Service and their performance with processing and determining planning applications;
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and complaints;
- Website and accessibility;
- Prioritisation of key priorities to enable greater focus of a smaller number of key priorities to ensure they are delivered before other priorities;
- Climate change Performance Indicators (PIs);
- Solar panels and renewable energy;
- How do officers manage situations where there was conflict with policies e.g. planning policy and climate change?;
- Relationship with TDA and TORVISTA and the Council in managing economic regeneration and housing; and
- Recycling levels and waste.

Members requested that more positive messaging be provided within the community, via social media and other methods to encourage people to reduce their carbon footprint and signposting them to relevant information and organisations that can help.

Members also requested that information and indicators to be included within future performance reports on:

- details of any planned actions that officers intend to take on projects or performance indicators that are a concern or well below target;
- new PI on the number of Council owned buildings that were not going to pass the EPC rating level C;
- a new PI (on data supplied by TDA) on the savings that were being made on the Council's energy usage;
- performance and risk reports to be considered as individual items possibly at separate meetings;
- future risk reports to flag any changes in red priorities and include emerging new risks;
- a new PI that shows the percentage of planning applications that were having an extension of time put to them (with a target to reduce this);
- new PIs showing the amount of officer and Committee planning decisions that were resulting in appeals;
- new risks around implementation of the CRM system and supply chain;
- to review the TDA business plan and demonstrate what elements of the Community and Corporate Plan they were delivering for the Council and how well they were progressing with these; and
- an update on the garden waste national consultation and how the Council intends to progress consideration on the introduction of such a service.

The Committee requested that the new Chief Operating Officer of SWISCo be invited to a future meeting to discuss their business plan and performance and the Assistant Director of Planning, Housing and Climate Emergency to come back to

the Committee in six months time, with a detailed report on the performance of the service showing the improvements that were being made.

260. Information Governance Annual Performance Report

Members considered and noted the Information Governance Annual Performance Report for 2020/2021 which provided an overview of the work of the Information Governance Team. The Head of Information Governance and Data Protection Officer outlined the work of the Team and how they support the whole of the Council to comply with their statutory requirements.

Members asked questions in respect of the following:

- Record retention;
- Capacity of staff to deal with statutory duties;
- What learning was taken from complaints;
- How complaints were logged and managed; and
- Access to data.

(Note: Councillor O'Dwyer left the meeting during discussion of this item.)

261. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Letter 2020/21

The Head of Information Governance and Data Protection outlined the submitted report on the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Letter for 2020/2021 and responded to questions in respect of:

- Annual cost of compensation arising from complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman; and
- The details of the recommendation which related to a hate crime.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

262. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

The Committee noted the submitted report which provided an update on the use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) powers. The Council did not use the powers to authorise the use of surveillance but the Head of Information Governance and Data Protection outlined the process that would be required should an officer need to undertake surveillance. The report also provided an update on the outcome of an inspection on the use of the Council's RIPA powers, which was undertaken every three years and Members noted the actions arising from the inspection.