

Minutes of the Audit Committee

30 September 2020

-: Present :-

Councillor Loxton (Chairman)

Councillors Hill, Howgate, Kennedy and O'Dwyer

(Also in attendance: Councillors Brooks)

210. Apologies

It was noted that since the publication of the agenda for this meeting there had been a change to the political balance of the Council resulting in a Conservative Group vacancy. Councillor David Thomas had filled the vacancy but had given his apologies for the meeting. In accordance with the wishes of the Independent Group, the membership of the Committee had been amended for this meeting by including Councillor Kennedy instead of Councillor Ellery. An apology for absence was received from Councillor Dart.

211. Corporate Performance and Corporate Risk Report

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 outline how well the council is performing against these key priorities. The report enables 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 Strategic Support Manager informed Members that the Council was in the process of producing a new Performance and Risk Strategy and Framework and if agreed this would replace the current arrangements. The Council was also seeking to replace the IT software currently used to monitor performance.

Members sought written responses/clarification on the following performance indicators:

- 'Numbers housed through Devon Home Choice' – are we able to identify where people are bidding from, are they within Torbay or outside, are there more bids from people living in particular parts of Torbay?

- In relation to 'Numbers in temporary accommodation' – are we aware of the previous type of accommodation that those currently in temporary accommodation came from?
- 'Indicators in relation to domestic abuse' - many expected the number of people accessing the Domestic Abuse Service to increase with the additional pressure caused by lockdown and subsequent financial pressures. Do we know why the figures as shown in the performance monitoring report have not increased as predicted/expected?
- 'Implement the trauma-informed approach across services' – it is noted that the implementation was suspended due to COVID-19, is the implementation likely to resume and if so when?
- 'Successful completion of drug treatment – opiate users' – Members questioned whether the programs being delivered are the right programs? They have also noted that the data is from 2018, do we have our own local intelligence that would provide a more up to date picture? Do we know what the current demand on services are and has this demand been impacted by COVID-19?
- 'Residual household waste per household' and 'Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting' – members queried whether quarter 1 was affected by COVID-19 (people having time to clear out lofts etc) or was there some other reason for the increase in residual waste and reduction in recycling levels?
- What are the reasons/background for the following indicators, being 'well below target':
 - Number of Corporate Complaints – Dealt with within timescales
 - Number of FOIs/EIRs – Dealt with within statutory timescales
 - Number of subject access requests (SARs) – Dealt with within statutory timescales
 - Registration of births – Registered within statutory timescales
 - Registration of deaths – Registered within 5 days

Members also requested indicators covering the following be included within future performance reports:

- Wage growth and employment figures;
- Number of children categorised as obese;
- Average cost per Child Looked After in residential and fostering setting;
- Customer satisfaction in respect of public toilet provision;
- Number of missed refuse collections

Members welcomed the suggestion that the Strategic Support Manager informally work with Members and the Head of the Devon Audit Partnership to develop a performance and risk register that would better assist Members to gain the

reassurance that the Council's risks and performance were being adequately monitored.

212. Audit Progress Report and Sector Update

The Committee noted a report that provided a summary of emerging national issues and developments that may have been relevant to Torbay Council.

213. Appointment of Independent Person for Audit Committee

Members considered a report on the appointment of an Independent Person. Members were advised that the Council had been unsuccessful in attracting a suitably qualified person to fulfil the role, the Audit Committee's views were sought on how to proceed.

The Chief Finance Officer advised that since the publication of the report, the draft findings of the Redmond Review had been published. He advised that if the recommendations were adopted, the Council would be required to appoint an Independent Chairman for the Audit Committee and therefore it may be prudent to await the final ratification of the Redmond Review before deciding on the next course of action in relation to the appointment of Independent Person.

Resolved:

That the appointment of an Independent Person be paused pending the findings of the Redmond Review. Should the Redmond Review not provide final recommendations before the Audit Committee in January the Committee be requested to consider the future approach to the appointment of an Independent Person.

214. Overview of Investigations

The Audit Committee noted the report and exempt appendix.

Chairman/woman