



Minutes of the Audit Committee

28 September 2017

-: Present :-

Councillor Tyerman (Chairman)

Councillors Bent, O'Dwyer, Stocks and Barnby

107. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Stringer and Alex Walling of Grant Thornton.

108. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 26 July 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

109. Urgent Items

The Committee considered the items in Minutes 112, and not included on the agenda, the Chairman being of the opinion that they were urgent by reason of special circumstances i.e. the matter having arisen since the agenda was prepared and it was unreasonable to delay a decision until the next meeting.

110. Food Standards Agency Audit of Food Hygiene Service Delivery

Members noted the Food Standards Agency Audit of Food Hygiene Service Delivery Focusing on Service Organisation, Management and Internal Monitoring Arrangements, the audit that had been instigated by a data return that the Local Authority had submitted to the Food Standards Agency highlighting the relatively low percentage of planned interventions achieved on lower risk premises.

The Principle Environmental Health Officer informed Members that the audit did not find issues with staff competency but that the resources were inadequate to fulfil the service plan. Whilst the service was under resourced it was difficult to say what level of staffing was needed, whilst a resource assessment had been conducted a further assessment would be undertaken once events planned for the autumn had been held as it was hoped these events would reduce the number of interventions required. One such event was training where all medium risk premises would be invited hopefully resulting in intervention for around 100 premises, a full inspection would then need to be undertaken the following year.

Members were informed that performance of the team was monitored by the FSA and the Community Safety Management Team received quarterly reporting. When an application is received an initial assessment is undertaken as to whether the premises would be a high risk premises, if so an inspection is undertaken as soon as possible. The team is also furnished with intelligence gathered from other teams such as Licensing and Health and Safety, who also undertake their own inspections and raise concerns with the Food Safety Team. The premises rating has also been a driver for the number of premises asking to be re-inspected. The scheme has resulted in an element of self-regulation and as more premises achieve the highest rating the less premises the Food Safety Team has to inspect.

Members were also informed that a member of the team will regularly be present at Brixham Fish Quay in order to ensure compliance with the standards required for the landing and export of fish. The mussel beds are also tested weekly, these inspections are vital for the success and reputation of the industry.

111. Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2017/18

Members considered a report that reviewed the Treasury Management activities during the first part of 2017/18. The Chief Finance Officer informed Members that in light of the significant increases in the Capital Plan arising from the Transformation Programme a revised Treasury Management Strategy had been produced. Members noted that peer to peer lending had probably come to the end of its use with the Council's focus changing to borrowing money.

The Chief Finance Officer informed Members that CIPFA were currently consulting on updates to both the Prudential Code and the Treasury Management Code of Practice to reflect the national increase in Councils use/purchase of 'non treasury investments'. The Chief Finance Officer sought Members views on whether increased levels of scrutiny and due diligence in relation to 'non treasury investments' would be something they recommend. Members felt that further investment portfolio training for Members would be of benefit, with the borrowing figures being split between that which is self-supporting by generating income and borrowing that isn't. That for the time being the setting of limits should be avoided. Members welcomed the suggestion that they be given the opportunity to provide informal feedback on the eventual report.

Resolved:

- i) that the Treasury Management decisions made during the first part of 2017/18 be noted;
- ii) that the revised Treasury Management Strategy for 2017/18 be noted; and
- iii) that the revised Prudential and Treasury Indicators 2017/18 be noted.

112. RIPA Inspection Report Conclusions

The Policy, Performance and Review Manager informed Members that the Office of Surveillance Commissioners had issued its final report regarding the inspection of the Council's RIPA policies and practices and presented Members with the conclusions from the report.

Members congratulated the Policy, Performance and Review Manager on the positive outcome of the inspection and welcomed the development of an action plan to address the gap created by the imminent departure a very experienced authorising officer.

113. Performance and Risk

Members noted a report that provided the performance and risk data for quarter one of 2017/18. Members referred to the indicators for Children's Services which highlighted issues that Members had been advised of at other meetings. Members questioned whether a deep dive exercise would be of use or whether the issue should be escalated to the Overview and Scrutiny to consider as part of their wider engagement with Children's Services.

Members were concerned to note that officers had not provided any data for the Attractive and Safe Place indicators. The Policy, Performance and Review Manager informed Members that the Senior Leadership Team were also concerned at the lack of data and would be raising the issue with officers.

The Policy, Performance and Review Manager expressed concern that the document wasn't as 'active' a document as it could be, whilst the Senior Leadership Team found the performance element really useful to challenge across teams enabling strong debate, the risk element of the data didn't seem to have the right strategic risks identified to make the document the 'active document' it needed to be, officers would therefore be reviewing the risk elements.

Resolved:

That the Chairman write to the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator requesting the Overview and Scrutiny Board consider the performance indicators for Children's Services as part of their wider engagement with the service.

114. The Annual Audit Letter for Torbay Council

The Committee noted the Annual Audit Letter for Torbay Council which summarised the key findings arising from the work Grant Thornton had undertaken as the Council's external auditors for the year ended 31 March 2017.

115. Torbay Council Audit Committee Update - September 2017

Members noted an update that provided details on progress Grant Thornton had made in delivering their responsibilities as the Council's external auditors.

Chairman/woman
