



GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY 15TH FEBRUARY 2024 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

M. A. Adams, Mrs. E.M. Aldworth, M. Chacon-Dawson, E. Davies, G. Enright, J. Taylor, and C. Wright (Vice Chair).

Lay Members:

N. Yates, M. Rees (Chair), and V. Pearson.

Together with:

Officers: D. Street (Deputy Chief Executive), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), D. Gronow (Acting Internal Audit Manager), R. Roberts (Business Improvement Manager), B. Thompson-Payne (Property Review Officer), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), L. Donovan (Head of People Services), L. Lucas (Head of Customer and Digital Services), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

M. Jones (Audit Wales).

Also in attendance: Councillor. E. Stenner.

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting would be live-streamed and a recording made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items - [Click Here to View](#). Members were advised that voting on decisions would take place via Microsoft Forms.

1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A. Broughton-Pettit, and Lay Member Mrs J. Williams.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 7TH NOVEMBER 2023

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Governance and Audit Committee held on 7th November 2023 be approved as a correct record, and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th November 2023 (minute nos. 1-9) be approved as a correct record.

4. GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer presented the Governance and Audit Committee Forward Work Programme for the period February 2024 to June 2024, together with an updated Action Sheet.

A Member requested an update on the action sheet, with regards to a conclusion date for the policy updates. Members were advised that this would be updated for the next Governance and Audit Committee meeting.

Members noted the details of reports scheduled for the forthcoming meetings.

It was moved and seconded that the Forward Work Programme be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers be approved.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

5. UPDATE FROM AUDIT WALES (VERBAL UPDATE).

M. Jones, Audit Wales, updated the Governance and Audit Committee on the financial and performance audit work. Members were advised that the Blackwood Arts Centre charity account had been certified and that the Council's grants that require auditing, were currently being audited. He also informed the Committee that the audit of the 2022/23 Financial Statements was ongoing and that a report on Cyber Security would also be prepared in relation to the performance audit work.

The Governance and Audit Committee noted the update.

6. DRAFT ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2022/23.

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the report which presented the Governance and Audit Committee with the Draft Annual Self-Assessment Report for 2022/23 for their consideration and comment prior to its onward submission to Joint Scrutiny on 26th February and Cabinet on 6th March 2024. The purpose of the report was to provide the Governance and Audit Committee with assurance that the Council's self-assessment

process is robust and effective.

Members were advised that the self-assessment report is a statutory requirement under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and it is an important part of the Council's performance framework. This is the second time the Council has been required to produce a self-assessment report which replaces the former Annual Performance Report. The Council is required to assess its own performance and provide the public with a balanced picture of that performance.

A Member referred to the term 'citizens' which appeared throughout the report and noted that 'residents' would be a more preferable term to be used, going forward. Members were advised that this matter could be given some consideration.

A Member sought clarification on the apprentice recruitment process referred to in the report, in addition to a report deadline of July 2023. Members were advised that the deadline was correct for the period being referred to. Members were informed that the apprenticeship recruitment had changed from an annual programme to offer contracts for a 2-year period to give the apprentices the best opportunities possible.

A Member requested a strategic overview for the self-assessment be produced in future and Members were advised that this could be considered. The Member also requested the inclusion of vacancy rates for future reports on the number of vacancies the organisation is carrying. Members were advised that the data was not currently held on the system but would be available in the next few months.

A Member raised a query on the backlog maintenance costs of property and assets and whether the data included an uplift. It was explained the data did not but when the next round of building surveys took place this would be considered.

A Member sought clarification on the term 'brought back in to use' in relation to the empty properties referred to in the report, and whether this meant that they were just available for renting or currently being rented. Members were advised that the properties referred to were completed with regards to works undertaken and were being rented or in the process of finalising rental arrangements. The Member also queried the data analysis process used and Members were advised of the automated process and analysis used by CCBC.

A Member asked for the number of invoice payments that we pay within 30 days to include percentages as well as numbers to add context for the next report. This will be updated for the 23/24 report.

A Member queried the term 'agile working' and noted that home working was not referred to in the report. Members were advised that there are no designated 'home workers' employed by CCBC, however staff can work on an agile basis, where possible, where a balance of office, home, and other work locations can be utilised, provided the needs of the service are being met. Members were also advised that Managers should monitor the wellbeing of their staff whether they are in a workplace, at home or another location. Members were informed that a recent staff survey had produced positive feedback from staff in relation to agile working supporting wellbeing.

The Chair noted that questions had been submitted prior to the meeting from an absent Lay-Member, and that the response to these questions would be followed up after the meeting and circulated to the Governance and Audit Committee members.

The Chair also noted that additional hyperlinks in future reports, particularly to the role of Governance and Audit in the self-assessment process, providing access to further

information on the committee's terms and reference would be beneficial to Members going forward.

Having reviewed the Draft Self-Assessment Report (Appendix 1), it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED to make changes, where necessary, to the conclusions or action the council intends to take.

7. UPDATE ON PSIAS SELF-ASSESSMENT.

The Acting Internal Audit Manager introduced the report which provided Members with an update on the most recent self-assessment undertaken in respect of the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and updated the Committee on progress made in respect of any actions outstanding since the previous self-assessment and external review. Members were informed that the most recent self-assessment had now been undertaken, and this had identified that Internal Audit Services were continuing to conform with the majority of the Standards.

Members were also advised that the action plan from the previous external assessment was included as appendix 1 and showed the progress on completion of those actions together with any further updates on those areas.

A Member sought clarification on the 'minor issues' referred to in the report, and whether they were connected. Members were advised that these related to IT audits, and the technical knowledge required to complete these audits could result in the need for external expert assistance. The Member also queried the PDR's (Personal Development Reviews), and Members were advised that this process had been replaced with 'My Time.'

A Member sought clarification on appendix 1 of the report and queried what the term 'not considered an issue' meant in relation to the self-assessment. The Member also requested more detail on how the assessment is undertaken. Members were advised that the document referred back to the original assessment completed in 2018/19, prior to the last election. Members were advised of the relevant details from that assessment, included in the report, and discussion followed regarding the previous assessments and how they were completed, and how the external assessments are undertaken.

The Governance and Audit Committee noted the content of the report.

8. UPDATE ON INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS.

The Acting Internal Audit Manager introduced the report which provided Members with an update on progress on Audit Report recommendations. The Governance and Audit Committee had requested that regular reports are provided in relation to the work of the Internal Audit Team, and the report provided an update on the number of recommendations arising from Internal Audit reviews and their current status.

A Member queried the overdue recommendations, referred to in the report, and whether the relevant Head of Service for that particular area could attend the Governance and Audit Committee meetings going forward, to advise Members. Members were advised that this could be considered for overdue recommendations in the future.

A Member sought clarification on 'cross cutting risks' where more than one department was affected, and who would take the lead on reducing these risks. Members were advised that where one audit covers numerous departments, a separate report would be completed by each Manager, which would be consolidated by the relevant Director. Members were informed of examples of these types of audits and how they would be managed.

A Member referred to the 5-year contract with Pentana, which is due to end, and queried whether this would affect the ongoing reports, going forward. The Member also sought clarification on the level of the overdue recommendations and whether these are followed up and signed off by audit on completion of the work. Members were advised that any new system would need to consider retaining the data of all the ongoing audit work. Members were also advised that the management of the risks was the responsibility of the relevant service manager, noting that the internal audit team have limited capacity to follow up every risk identified. Members were also advised that where some risks were overdue and not completed, referrals could be made to the S151 Officer.

A Member sought clarification on the escalation process for the overdue recommendations and how this would be confirmed by Directors in their statement of reassurance that this work had been completed. Members were advised that all the overdue recommendations would be followed up, and advised Members that they could request more information from Heads of Service, together with their attendance at Governance and Audit meetings, if required.

The Governance and Audit Committee noted the content of the report.

9. REGULATOR RECOMMENDATION TRACKER PROGRESS UPDATE.

The Business Improvement Manager introduced the report which updated Members on the progress of recommendations that have been made by all regulators since the last Governance and Audit Committee update and advised on any new proposals that have been added since that time.

Members were advised that the register was last updated and presented to the Governance and Audit Committee in November 2023, and since that time there have been 2 new reports received and 4 new proposals added on to the register, with a current total of 14 recommendations. Members were informed that 2 recommendations were considered to be actioned and completed, and with the agreement of the Governance and Audit Committee this would leave 12 outstanding recommendations.

Having considered the report, it was moved and seconded that the proposals noted as 'completed' within Appendix A be closed. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the proposals noted as 'completed' within Appendix A be closed.

10-11. INFORMATION ITEMS

It was confirmed that the following items had not been called forward for discussion at the meeting, and the Committee noted the contents of the reports. A Member sought clarification on the costs of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, and Members were advised that this request would be forwarded to the report author for clarification following the meeting: -

- (i) Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000;
- (ii) Officer's Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality October to December 2023.

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and contributions and the meeting closed at 3.36 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 16th April 2024.

CHAIR