

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Thursday, 29th February, 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Will Bostock in the Chair;

Councillors Ian Briggs, Sarah Lewsey and
John Smallridge.

Apology for Absence: Councillor Dawn Justice.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Ruth Dennis, Theresa Hodgkinson,
Peter Hudson and Andrew Page.

In Attendance: Mark Surrige (MAZARS)
Mandy Marples and Hannah McDonald (CMAP).

AC.24 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

AC.25 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 February 2024, be received and approved as a correct record.

AC.26 MAZARS: Audit Completion Report

Mark Surrige presented the Audit Completion report for Mazars to those charged with governance for 2022/23.

Section 2 - Executive Summary

Committee Members acknowledged that the audit work was substantially complete and an unqualified opinion, without modification on the financial statements, was anticipated. In respect of the Value For Money audit, it was also anticipated that there would be no significant weaknesses in arrangements to report, in relation to the arrangements that the Council has in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

Section 4 - Significant Findings

In relation to 'Management Override of Controls' as a significant risk as outlined in Section 4 of the report, it was noted that no issues from the audit had been identified that needed to be brought to the attention of Members.

The Pension Scheme liability/asset valuation had now been completed and based on the work completed, one immaterial misstatement had been identified arising from information provided by the Pension Fund auditor but management had chosen not to adjust due to the immaterial value of the misstatement.

The Valuation of Land and Buildings had proved difficult to complete for a number of reasons and some control recommendations on these matters have duly been raised with management. However, on completion of the audit, assurances were provided as required.

Internal Control Recommendations

With regard to internal control recommendations, no significant findings or recommendations in relation to internal controls had been noted at the present time.

Summary of Misstatements

To conclude, Members were asked to note action taken in respect of the two misstatements, as outlined in the summary.

RESOLVED

that the Audit Completion report for 2022/23, as presented to Committee by Mazars, be duly received and noted.

AC.27 MAZARS: Auditor's Annual Report

Mark Surridge presented the Auditor's Annual Report which summarised the work that Mazars had undertaken as the auditor for Ashfield District Council, for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Value For Money Conclusion

In relation to the three control areas namely, Financial Sustainability, Governance and Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness, Members were advised that all procedures were in place and no significant weaknesses or risks associated with the same, had been identified.

Cabinet and Council had received detailed reports for budget setting purposes including an update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, with the content adequately reflecting the limitations of financial planning through the current one-year local government finance settlements.

In respect of Risk Management, adequate arrangements were in place but the Audit Committee had not received any report updates during 2022/23. As the Committee was responsible for ensuring that the Authority's risk identification, measurement and management processes were operating efficiently this would need to be addressed moving forward.

Mazars were satisfied that work on the Local Plan was progressing and facilitation of the Towns Fund development had adequate governance arrangements in place.

RESOLVED

that the Audit Completion report for 2022/23, as presented to Committee by Mazars, be duly received and noted.

AC.28 Audited Statement of Accounts 2022/23

The Corporate Resources Director (and Section 151 Officer) presented the Council's audited Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 to Committee for approval.

RESOLVED that

- a) having considered the outcomes from the External Auditors Completion Report 2022/23 presented in the previous item, the audited Statement of Accounts for 2022/23, be approved;
- b) delegated authority for the final approval of the audited Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 be granted to the Corporate Resources Director (Section 151 Officer), subject to a satisfactory outcome of outstanding items and to report back to Audit Committee details of any changes, if required.

Following the vote, two copies of the audited Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 were duly signed by the Audit Committee Chairman and responsible officers accordingly.

AC.29 Audit Progress Report

Mandy Marples, CMAP's Audit Manager, presented the report and summarised audit progress as at 29 February 2024. Committee Members were advised that good progress was being made against the Audit Plan and all programmed audit assignments were now underway.

Five pieces of work had been finalised since the last update and a synopsis of each of the completed assignments was presented regarding the following:

Markets 2023-24
Revenues System 2023-24
Members' Code of Conduct
Anti-Fraud & Corruption 2023-24
Responsive Repairs 2023-24.

Members were asked to note that in respect of Anti-Fraud & Corruption 2023-24, work had been undertaken as a consultancy review to provide the Council with a position statement on their outstanding recommendations in this area, and to identify further areas of best practice where the Council could improve its fraud risk management framework.

RESOLVED

that audit assignment progress as at 29 February 2024, as presented to Committee, be received and noted.

AC.30 Corporate Governance Update

The Executive Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer presented the report which advised on the arrangements for preparing the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24 and also provided a summary on how the Council's Whistleblowing Policy had operated during the preceding 12 months. Members were asked to note that no changes had been made to the Whistleblowing Policy on this occasion.

RESOLVED

that the following be received and noted:

- a) the process for preparing the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement;
- b) the details regarding the operation of the Whistleblowing Policy during 2023/24.

The meeting closed at 7.49 pm

Chairman.