

Minutes



OF A MEETING OF THE

Joint Audit and Governance Committee

HELD ON TUESDAY 5 JULY 2022 AT 6.30 PM

FIRST FLOOR MEETING SPACE, 135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK,
OX14 4SB

Present in the meeting room

Committee Members:

South Oxfordshire District Councillors: Mocky Khan (Co-Chair in the Chair), Peter Dragonetti, and George Levy

Vale of White Horse District Councillors: Andy Foulsham (Co-Chair), Amos Duveen, and Mike Pighills

Other Vale of White Horse Members: Andrew Crawford

Officers: Michael Flowers and Simon Hewings

Remote attendance:

South Oxfordshire District Councillors: Leigh Rawlins

Vale of White Horse District Councillors: Debby Hallett and Simon Howell

Officers: Patrick Arran (Head of Legal and Democratic), Harry Barrington-Mountford (Head of Policy and Programmes), Yvonne Cutler-Greaves (Assurance Team Leader), Victoria Dorman-Smith (Internal Audit Manager), David Fairall (People and Culture Manager), Susie Royce (Broadcasting Officer)

11 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jane Murphy.

12 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 May 2022 as a correct record and agree that the chair signs them as such.

13 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

14 Urgent business and chair's announcements

There was no urgent business.

15 Public participation

None.

16 Amended Pension Policy and Policy Statements

The people and culture manager introduced the item and explained that this policy was required to go through the committee for sign-off and approval under the constitution.

The committee asked for a correction of a typographical error on section 2.6 of the report. The committee then noted that the pension was generous, and added that a 3 per cent inflator would require the responsible authority to have enough assets to pay for the councils' pension liabilities, and asked whether this would put any increased risk or pressure on the councils. The head of finance clarified that the vast majority of the document was a required scheme, and for the pension scheme, it was subject to an evaluation, and this would determine the pension liability on the councils.

South Oxfordshire District Council **RESOLVED:** to adopt the amended pension policy and respective policy statements.

Vale of White Horse District Council **RESOLVED:** to adopt the amended pension policy and respective policy statements.

17 Internal audit activity report - first quarter 2022/23

The internal audit manager introduced the item and confirmed that they would present the activity and management report as one item, with the committee being asked to take two separate votes, one for each item, to note the reports.

The committee were given an update on the progress of audits, and were informed that five planned audits and one follow up audit had been completed, and that there were no limited assurance audits.

RESOLVED: to note the internal audit activity report – first quarter 2022/23.

18 Internal audit management report - first quarter 2022/23

The internal audit manager confirmed that six planned audits from the current year internal audit plan were in progress and there were no specific concerns to raise to the committee's attention.

RESOLVED: to note the internal audit management report – first quarter 2022/23.

19 Internal audit annual report 2021/22

The internal audit manager introduced the report, and explained that this annual report summarised the work carried out during the 2021/22 financial year. The committee was advised that twenty-one audits had been completed, with six in draft report stage awaiting management responses. Of the twenty-one audits, eight related to key financial audits. During the year, a total of thirteen audits were either deferred or not performed with the reasons being outlined in the report. The internal audit manager concluded by confirming that two key performance targets were achieved for operational and financial audits.

The committee asked a question seeking clarification on the time spent on audits. The internal audit manager confirmed that this is due to several factors including, delays in receiving audit information, additional audit testing, and the fact that budgeted hours are a best estimate of audit time needed. Hours spent on individual audits are regularly reviewed by the internal audit manager and auditors to understand reasons for overruns and to ensure budgeted hours are adjusted for future audits as needed. Additionally, the committee asked the manager on the status of current staffing in the internal audit team. The internal audit manager responded that the team was at a full complement with three auditors and an internal audit manager.

The committee sought clarification on the variance in lost days. The internal audit manager confirmed that lost days related to sickness, and other unplanned leave. A second question from the committee followed seeking information on the variance of 579 planned audit allocation days to 436 days carried out. The internal audit manager responded by explaining that chargeable day decreases had occurred due to unplanned lost days, and a slight increase in administration time.

RESOLVED: to note the internal audit annual report – 2021/22.

20 Health and safety

The people and culture manager introduced the report and explained that this report had followed the recent report presented at the last committee meeting due to a change in staffing structure which had impacted the traditional report dates. The people and culture manager confirmed that they were currently undertaking work on the health safety policy, and champions. Additional work was taking place regarding training that related to staff workplace roles. The committee were told that other work was in progress towards having a baseline of compliance training, but that this was on track and that officers were happy with the progress.

The committee asked if there had been any learnings from the spike relating to incidents reported during 2021. The manager responded that there had been a major learning on the personal risk element. The near misses also related to a national trend which was noticed through interactions with the public. The committee were subsequently informed that the councils' health and safety advisor was involved in the training of staff to help put the appropriate measures in place.

The committee asked a supplementary question asking if the increase in incidents a result of an increase of abuse were to staff and visitors. The response from the officers were that

cases remained very low; however, they were seeing more incidents reported, which was positive as it helped identify when these situations were occurring.

The committee raised the suggestion that information relating to abuse directed towards councillors would be beneficial due to the public role the elected officials hold, and the subsequent abuse they receive would be beneficial for tracking and monitoring.

RESOLVED: to

- a. Continue undertaking a half-yearly progress review of health and safety as outlined in the health and safety strategic review.
- b. Note the report.

21 Corporate risk review

The assurance team leader introduced the item. The committee was informed that two new risks had been added to the register, one being the failure to consider the economic impact of the Russo-Ukrainian War, and the second risk related to the failure to support and equip staff for hybrid working. The assurance team leader confirmed that the risk for third party contractors' business continuity plans, and file back-ups not being fit for purpose had an increase in net score, and that work was currently underway to resolve the risk.

RESOLVED: to

- a. Continue undertaking a half yearly progress review of the corporate risk registers as outlined in the risk management strategy.
- b. Note the report.

22 Work programme

RESOLVED: to note the committee work programme.

The meeting closed at 7.11 pm

Chair

Date

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