

Minutes



OF A MEETING OF THE

Joint Audit and Governance Committee

HELD AT 6.30 PM ON MONDAY 25 JANUARY 2016

MEETING ROOM 1, 135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK, MILTON,
OX14 4SB

Present

Simon Howell (Co-Chairman in the Chair)

Charles Bailey, Dudley Hoddinott, Chris Palmer, Henry Spencer, Alan Thompson and John Walsh

Officers:

Sandy Bayley, David Buckle, Andrew Down, William Jacobs, Fiona Kaluza, Nicola Meurer, Adrianna Partridge and Sally Truman.

Also present:

EY Auditors: Adam Swain and Andrew Brittain

30 Apologies

Councillor Kevin Bulmer sent his apologies for absence.

31 Declarations of disposable pecuniary interest

None.

32 Minutes

The committee requested an update regarding Item 16 – application of restrictions imposed by Section 157 of the Housing Act 1985 in South Oxfordshire – consideration of the local government ombudsman's report. This will be circulated separately.

RESOLVED: to adopt as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2015 and agree that the chairman sign them as such.

33 Review of complaints received during 2014/15

The committee considered the chief executive's report on a review of complaints received during 2014/15.

The committee noted that the level of complaints received during the year was fairly consistent with the previous year as were complaints taken to stage 2 of the process. The only major increase was in the number of ombudsman investigations received. Service areas with the highest number of complaints were benefits and planning.

RESOLVED: to note the review of complaints report 2014/15.

34 Review of our response to the Crowmarsh fire 15 January 2015

The committee considered a report summarising the outcomes of a review on the council's response to the Crowmarsh Gifford fire which occurred on 15 January 2015. The report included 19 recommendations; 16 lessons learnt; and results from public consultation on how well the councils responded.

In response to a member's question about whether local authorities interested in the lessons learnt had changed their contingency plans, officers reported that in their opinion, traditional business continuity plans do not offer enough flexibility to respond to an incident and therefore the council will use a template based approach moving forward. This has been positively received by interested local authorities.

Following a detailed discussion about support for staff, compensation offered for personal items, planned evacuation tests and communication plan; members thanked officers for an outstanding report in terms of content and learnings.

RESOLVED: to note the report on the review of our response to the Crowmarsh fire.

35 Internal audit activity report – third quarter 2015/16

The committee considered the assurance manager's report on internal audit activity during the third quarter 2015/16. This summarised the outcomes of recent audit activity.

Twelve audits had been completed during the quarter, together with five follow-up audits.

SODC and WWHDC partnership performance monitoring 2015/2016

In response to a member's question about having a central register of partnerships, the partnerships manager confirmed that a register of basic partnerships and key criteria will be available. **Officers to circulate.**

RESOLVED: to note the internal audit activity report for the third quarter 2015/16.

36 Procurement of IT Equipment

The committee considered the Head of HR, IT and Technical services' report concerning procurement of IT equipment from a particular supplier in the months

after the fire of January 2015. The procurement was stated to be in “clear breach of OJEU rules and procurement protocols”.

Following a discussion, the committee agreed that the 55 purchase orders made did not represent a single procurement exercise and there was therefore no breach of the EU directive/public contracts regulations 2015.

RESOLVED: to note the procurement of IT equipment report.

37 Internal audit management report - third quarter 2015/16

The committee considered the assurance manager’s management report on internal audit for the third quarter of 2015/16.

RESOLVED: to note the internal audit management report for the third quarter of 2015/16.

38 External auditor's annual audit letters 2014/15

The committee considered the external auditor’s (Ernst & Young) annual audit letters for 2014/15.

RESOLVED: to note the external auditor’s (Ernst & Young) annual audit letters for 2014/15.

39 External auditor's report on the certification of claims and returns 2014/15

Adam Swain, the council’s external auditor from EY (Ernst & Young), presented the certification of claims and returns annual report for 2014/15. He summarised the key findings, which showed that there had been few issues and no amendments.

RESOLVED: to note the report on the certification of claims and returns 2014/15.

40 Treasury management mid-year monitoring report 2015/16

The committee considered the head of finance’s report that monitored performance of the council’s treasury management function for the first half of 2015/16.

The head of finance clarified that the difference in rate of returns of investment between the two councils was due to South having more long-term investments and therefore achieving higher rates of return.

RECOMMEND to Cabinet to recommend Council to:

- (a) Note the treasury management mid-year monitoring report 2015/16;
- (b) Record that the committee is satisfied that the treasury management activities are carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy; and

- (c) Request the cabinets to consider the comments of this committee and recommend the Councils to approve the report.

41 Treasury management strategy 2016/17 to 2018/19

The committee considered the head of finance's report that reviewed the treasury management and investment strategy for 2016/17 to 2018/19.

There were no major changes proposed to investing funds.

RECOMMEND to Cabinet to recommend Council to:

- (a) approve the treasury management strategy 2016/17 set out in appendix A to the head of finance's report;
- (b) approve the prudential indicators and limits for 2016/17 to 2018/19 as set out in table 2, appendix A to the head of finance's report;
- (c) approve the annual investment strategy 2016/17 set out in appendix A (paragraphs 23 to 58) and the lending criteria detailed in table 5 to the head of finance's report.

42 Audit and governance work programme

The committee reviewed and noted its work programme which set out matters scheduled for consideration at future meetings.

43 Exclusion of the public including the press

RESOLVED: that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the remainder of the meeting to prevent the disclosure to them of exempt information, as defined in Section 100(I) and Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, to the Act when the following items are considered.

44 Internal audit report - cash office

The committee noted a report summarising the outcomes of a recent internal audit review of the cash office at both councils.

45 Internal audit report - planning application

The committee considered a report summarising the outcomes of a recent internal audit investigation within development management, planning.

Committee noted the report and requested a follow-up report in July.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

Chairman

Date