



Rutland County Council

Catmose Oakham Rutland LE15 6HP

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Minutes of the **MEETING of the AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Catmose, Oakham, LE15 6HP on Tuesday, 5th December, 2023 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor K Payne (Chair) Councillor R Ross (Vice-Chair)
Councillor S Lambert Councillor R Payne
Councillor R Powell Councillor M Chatfield

ABSENT: Councillor A West Councillor L Stephenson

OFFICERS PRESENT: Kirsty Nutton Strategic Director for Resources
Andrew Merry Head of Finance
Rachel Ashley-Caunt Chief Internal Auditor
David Ebbage Democratic Services Officer

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor A Johnson Portfolio Holder

1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor L Stephenson. Councillor M Chatfield attended the meeting as the representative for Councillor A West.

2 MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings held on 26 September and 31st October 2023.

It was moved by Councillor K Payne and seconded that the minutes of the 26 September and 31st October 2023 meetings be approved.

RESOLVED

- a) That the minutes of the meetings held on 26 September and 31st October 2023 be **APPROVED**.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

No petitions deputations or questions had been received.

5 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

No questions with notice from Members had been received.

6 NOTICES OF MOTION

No notices of motion had been received.

7 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Report No.174/2023 was introduced by Rachel Ashley Caunt, Chief Internal Auditor.

Since the last Audit and Risk Committee meeting, 22 audit actions had been closed as implemented. At the date of reporting, there were 18 audit actions which remained overdue for implementation – two of the overdue actions were of a ‘high priority’ rating and over three months overdue.

Finalised Audit reports had been issued in relation to the following audits from the 2023/24 Audit Plan: Commissioning of Leisure Services; and verification of Disabled Facilities Grant and Bus Subsidy Grants for 2022/23. None of the audit reviews had resulted in assurance opinions of less than Moderate Assurance and none have been assessed a ‘High’ organisational risk.

Members were informed that Property Services had moved directorates to be under Strategic Director for Resources. It was agreed by officers for a more comprehensive update be brought to the next meeting around the outstanding actions for that service.

Action: Kirsty Nutton

Members were updated on the outstanding actions recommendation raised at the September meeting. Cabinet now looked at the implementation of Audit Actions on a quarterly basis through the Joint Leadership Team meetings and a further update on this issue to come to the next meeting.

Action: Kirsty Nutton and Cllr A Johnson

RESOLVED

That Committee:

- a) **NOTED** the Internal Audit update report (Appendix A).

8 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN DEVELOPMENT 2024/25

Report No.175/2023 was introduced by Rachel Ashley Caunt, Chief Internal Auditor.

The Committee was informed on the process to be followed in developing the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25 and invited the Committee to highlight any areas where assurance was required from the Internal Audit team during the next financial year.

Members asked for highways to be an area of consideration with there being a new contractor from 1st April 2024. The current Internal Audit Plan was undertaking work around the procurement of the new highways contract, this would follow through to see how that contract was being applied in practice. This would be put towards the end of the next financial year to make sure there was enough to audit.

Levelling Up was another area for consideration Members wanted to be looked at. Currently, joint work with Melton was being carried out around the governance review, next year would be more focussed on Rutland specific areas and the delivery of those projects.

The Chair asked for an an additional area to be considered and that was the Local Lead Flood Authority needed to be added onto the Audit Plan. Climate Change had impacted local areas recently with recent storms and floods. The council hadn't dealt with the recent issues effectively under their statutory duties.

RESOLVED

That Committee:

- a) **NOTED** the process to be followed to develop the risk-based Audit Plan for 2024/25.
- b) **HIGHLIGHTED** areas for consideration for the 2024/25 for the Audit Plan to the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee and the Chief Internal Auditor by 31st January 2024.

9 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2021/22 AND 2022/23

Andrew Merry, Head of Finance verbally updated the Committee on the Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Due to recent capacity issues within the Finance Department, the 2021/22 accounts had not been finalised and signed. Head of Finance hoped for the issues to be resolved by the beginning of 2024 for then to be signed.

For the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts, the Council had responded to 105 audit requests and 56 requests currently with the finance team. He informed Members that budget setting at this time of the year was priority over responding to audit requests, but the finance team had been out to recruitment and would hopefully be back to full capacity within in the new year to increase workflow.

10 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

Report No.175/2023 was introduced by Kirsty Nutton, Strategic Director for Resources.

The Committee undertook further training in September 2023 through attendance at a training session run by Zurich Resilience Solutions. Members were briefed on the management of risk in Council activities and considered what information is required to evaluate and ensure effective risk management is adopted.

In September 2023 the Council approved a new Reserves Strategy and Policy. As part of this Strategy an assessment was undertaken as to the possible risk exposure for the Council alongside the likelihood of occurrence. The assessment by the S151 had enabled the Council to identify balances to mitigate risk and provide investment opportunities for future savings proposals and / or enhanced service.

The Chair asked for some further clarification on Risk ID: 76 where the actions didn't relate to financial statements so asked for them to be made clearer and for some controls to be added around the retention issues in Risk ID: 73. Officers agreed and reassured the Chair that those points would be actioned.

The Committee congratulated everyone involved with the most recent OFSTED inspection in July and the positive outcome which came from it.

RESOLVED

That Committee:

- a) **CONSIDERED** the content of the updated Strategic Risk Register (Appendix A) and the actions underway to address the risks.

11 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA)

Kirsty Nutton, Strategic Director for Resources verbally confirmed to the Committee that there had been no use of the provisions of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act since the last update.

12 COMMITTEE TRAINING

Rachel Ashley-Caunt, Chief Internal Auditor gave Members a brief introduction to a self-assessment process for the Committee to see how the Committee performed. Would benefit the Committee to see what areas that potentially could be improved. The self-assessment was a good starting point to develop a training plan for the Committee, the training plan would then feed into an annual report to Council.

It was agreed that a meeting would be set up through Democratic Services in January for the self-assessment to begin and then bring something to the next Committee in March to then take to Council in the new financial year.

Action: David Ebbage

Members felt it was a valuable opportunity and for preferred a group meeting to be arranged with all Members rather than individually.

13 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 5th March 2024.

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The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.07pm.

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No.	Ref.	Action	Person
1.	7	Update on outstanding actions for Property Services.	Kirsty Nutton
2.	7	Feedback on overdue actions raised to Cabinet.	Kirsty Nutton Cllr A Johnson
3.	3	Self-assessment meeting to be set up by Democratic Services.	David Ebbage