



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 Catmose on Tuesday, 5th November, 2019 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Miss G Waller Mrs K Payne
Mrs R Powell Mr I Razzell
Mr N Woodley

ABSENT: Mr E Baines Mr A Brown

OFFICERS PRESENT: Ms R Ashley-Caunt Head of Internal Audit
Mr S Della Rocca Strategic Director for Resources
Mrs E Powley Governance Manager
Ms S Bingham Business Support Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr G Brown Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning Environment, Property and Finance
Mr Harvey External Auditor, Grant Thornton PLC

335 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Baines and Councillor A Brown.

336 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 1st October 2019 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

The Chair thanked the Governance Team for providing clear and concise minutes at the previous meeting.

337 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

338 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

339 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Chair commented that a question had been submitted at short notice.

Mr Jones read out his question:

Question: For strategic risk registers there are accepted practice and standards (such as ISO 13000) which put the function of the risk register to qualify the effect of uncertainty on the achievement of the organisation's objectives. In the submitted strategic risk register to today's meeting - there is very limited description of the risks and very limited information on quantifiable impact upon which members of the Audit and Risk Committee can evaluate risks to the county. (An example of descriptions, and quantifiable impact ratings could be in the LLC Risk Forum Community Risk Register.) Furthermore, the risk register has introduced 6 new risks, but there are no financial implications for mitigation according to the Cabinet submission. Does the committee agree that it has sufficient information to adequately rate and agree these risk impacts and their mitigations, in line with the current risk management policy, thereby discharging the committee's duty?

The Chair noted that in accordance with the Constitution a written response to the question would be circulated in the minutes.

340 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

There were no questions with notice from Members.

341 NOTICES OF MOTION

There were no notices of motion received from Members.

342 RISK REGISTER

Report No.117/2019 was received from the Strategic Director for Resources, the purpose of which was for the Committee to note the contents of the Risk Register and to provide assurance that strategic risks were being adequately managed.

The Strategic Director explained that the Committee had previously received the Risk Register at its meeting in July 2019, and as a result of the members request to have a more concise register, and consequentially an abridged version was being submitted.

The Committee agreed that the changes to the report were welcome and the Chair noted that if there were any specific areas they wished to examine further, they could make such requests through the Chairs' of the relevant Scrutiny Committees.

In response to questions asked, the Director of Resources clarified the following:

- a) Consideration would be given whether it would be possible to provide an inherent and residual risk matrix for each Directorate.
- b) Some of the risks removed from the register continued to remain under review but were considered too vague for inclusion and new risks had been added to the register.
- c) Work was being undertaken to provide a new model of delivery for children with SEND through SEND Strategic Partnerships.
- d) Consideration would be given to providing additional controls in the Risks titled 'Failure to Safeguard (Children)' and 'Failure to Safeguard (Adults)' in order to

identify individuals who may be considered vulnerable and in need of safeguarding.

- e) Whilst there was an accumulative budget deficit in relation to High Needs funding, the Council were awaiting updates from Government and therefore assurance could not be given that this would not have an impact on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

In response to a question asked, the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Planning, Property, and Finance noted the Risk Title: 'Failure to identify infrastructure needs to support growth and out in place plans to deliver it' and explained that within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan refresh included the provision of leisure activities.

Members of the Committee raised some concerns about staffing levels and the risks associated, specifically in relation to a number of vacant posts in the Places Directorate.

The Strategic Director of Resources explained that there were interim arrangements in place to cover some vacant posts, but that the residual risk was deemed high as the notice period for interims is short. Efforts were being made to recruit to the vacant positions.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee noted the contents of the Risk Register.

343 COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS REPORT

The Director of Resources submitted the report 140/2019 – Compliments, Comments and Complaints Annual report and elaborated thereon. It was explained that annual report provided an overview of the numbers of Compliments, Comments and Complaints received by the Council over that last financial year and included an updated Draft Policy for consideration by the Audit and Risk Committee prior to it being submitted for Cabinet approval.

It was noted that complaints had been analysed and it had been observed that they had mostly fallen into three categories: Policy, Service Standard and Treatment.

In response to questions asked, the Strategic Director of Resources confirmed that the Council received very few vexatious complaints and that it was for the Monitoring Officer to determine whether a complainant was vexatious. It was explained that one complaint had been made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsmen and had been upheld but that the Council had recognised being at fault and thus taken remedial action to address the complaint and no further action was required.

The Chair expressed concern of the change to a frontline manager responding to a stag 1 complaint and a Senior Manager responding to a stage 2 complaint. The Director of Resources explained that the amendments to officers dealing with the stages of the complaints was to reflect the Council's structure (not every team has a Head of Service for example), ensure more flexibility and an improved response to complaints. He confirmed that the 'senior manager' referred to would be part of the Senior Management Team which comprised Directors and Deputy Directors only.

Members of the Committee discussed the options that were available to them when complaints were received about the Council from residents in their wards. Questions were raised as to whether further mechanisms could be used for Councillors to escalate complaints. The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Planning, Property, and Finance explained that should members not consider their complaints have been dealt with efficiently or appropriately, contact should be made with the relevant Cabinet Member. This would allow them to identify processes that were not working or demonstrating weakness.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Committee endorsed the content of the Annual Compliments, Comments and Complaints report.
- 2) That the Committee commented on the Draft Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedure.

344 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Head of Internal Audit submitted a report which updated Members on the progress made in delivering the 2019/20 Annual Audit Plan and outcomes from audit assignments completed since the last Committee meeting. It was reported that since the last Committee meeting, four recommendations had been confirmed as implemented. It was noted that the Medium priority 'Waste Contract 2017-18' was progressing and Biffa had confirmed their Bond was with HSBC and that updates were being received from them on a daily basis.

It was further noted that the High priority 'GDPR 2018-29' had been closed

RESOLVED:

That Members noted the contents of the Internal Audit update report.

345 AUDIT PLANNING - 2019/20

The Head of Internal Audit submitted a report which sought to update and advise Members on the process to be followed in developing the Internal Audit Plan.

Members of the Audit and Risk Committee were invited to raise any areas where assurance from Internal Audit was sought for inclusion and prioritisation in the development of the Audit Plan.

The following items were requested for consideration in developing the Internal Audit Plan:

- a) What the implications would be following a change in Government.
- b) Results and outcomes of the Peer Review
- c) Project Management
- d) Safeguarding issues that cut across social care and health

RESOLVED:

1. That the process to be followed to develop the risk based Audit Plan for 2020/21 be noted.
2. That the above suggested areas be considered for inclusion for the 2020/21 Audit plan.

346 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

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The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.59pm.

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