

AUDIT COMMITTEE – 22 June 2018

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| Title of paper: | | AUDIT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME | |
| Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s): | | Director of Strategic Finance | Wards affected: All |
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| Other colleagues who have provided input: | | | |
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| Recommendation(s): | | | |
| 1 | To note the role and functions of the Audit Committee including the additional elements prescribed by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and the benefits arising from its existence | | |
| 2 | To endorse the outline work programme at Appendix 1 including the Assurance Plan and the terms of reference at Appendices 2 and 3. | | |

1 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Although an Audit Committee is not a legal requirement it is necessary for a sound management and has a role in satisfying section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 which requires every local authority to 'make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs', and the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 which require that the authority ensures that it has a sound system of internal control which:
 - (a) facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and the achievement of its aims and objectives;
 - (b) ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective; and
 - (c) includes effective arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.2 An Audit Committee also reinforces the importance of probity, and performance and risk management. This report outlines the core functions of the Audit Committee, the benefits that will arise for the City Council and an outline annual work programme.
- 1.3 Role of the Audit Committee - The overarching purpose of an Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance on the adequacy and integrity of the governance and control environment, the Risk Management Framework, and the annual financial reporting process. As part of this role the proposed work programme this year includes agreeing the council's Assurance Framework.
- 1.4 Benefits of the Audit Committee - The benefits to be gained from operating an effective Audit Committee are that it:
 - Raises greater awareness of the need for effective internal control and the implementation of audit recommendations;
 - Increases public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting;
 - Reinforces the importance and independence of internal and external audit and any other similar review process, for example by providing a view on the annual governance statement;

- Provides additional assurance through a process of independent and objective review.

1.5 Constitutional Role - The Audit Committee aims to improve corporate focus on governance by:

- Providing assurance on the adequacy of the Risk Management Framework and the associated control environment;
- Scrutinising the Council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Council's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment;
- Overseeing the financial reporting process
- Approving the Council's Statement of Accounts;
- Commenting on the scope and nature of external audit;
- Overseeing proposed and actual changes to the Council's policies and procedures pertaining to governance

1.6 Functions of the Committee - The Audit Committee fulfils the following functions:

- functions listed in Appendix 2 under delegations from Executive Board as noted in the Constitution – Responsibilities for Functions and Terms of Reference
- functions listed in Appendix 3 under PSIAS as a consequence of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

2 **BACKGROUND**

2.1 An Audit Committee is central to the provision of effective corporate governance, which partly depends on a systematic strategy, clear framework and processes for managing risk. Good governance also helps to deliver improved services and maintains and increases public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting. It is important that local authorities have independent assurance about the mechanisms underpinning governance.

2.2 It is recognised that high performing councils develop effective financial and non-financial control mechanisms. The development of expertise made available by the establishment of an Audit Committee, meeting on a regular cycle, and with Terms of Reference focussed on the key audit, control and risk management areas critical to the Council's performance is a key part of these mechanisms.

2.3 The Committee's outline work programme is attached as Appendix 1. The work programme supports the Council's aim to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. It has been developed to address

- the Terms of Reference for the Committee approved by the City Council which are included within Appendix 2 and
- the requirements of PSIAS which are shown in Appendix 3.

2.4 In accordance with CIPFA guidance, the Committee is politically balanced and will not have Executive membership. Membership will continue to be reviewed in accordance with guidance from the Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG).

3 **BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING EXEMPT OR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

3.1 None

4 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

- 4.1 Advice note from CIPFA Technical Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities (CIPFA)