

Nottingham City Council

Audit Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Loxley House on 24 September 2021 from 10.33 am - 11.27 am

Membership

Present

Councillor Graham Chapman
Councillor Michael Edwards
Councillor Jane Lakey
Councillor Sajid Mohammed (Vice Chair)
Councillor Anne Peach
Councillor Ethan Radford
Councillor Andrew Rule

Absent

Councillor Audra Wynter
Councillor AJ Matsiko

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Beth Brown	- Head of Legal and Governance
John Gregory	- Grant Thornton, External Auditors
Shail Shah	- Head of Audit and Risk
John Slater	- Group Auditor
Laura Wilson	- Senior Governance Officer

30 Chair

In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair, Councillor Sajid Mohammed, took the Chair for the meeting.

31 Update in Membership

The Committee noted the appointment of Councillor Ethan Radford.

32 Apologies

Councillor Audra Wynter – other Council business

33 Declarations of Interests

Councillor Ethan Radford informed the Committee that he was no longer a Board member of Nottingham City Homes.

34 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2021 were confirmed as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

35 Work Programme and Action Log

Committee Members noted the proposed work programme, and that there would be no meeting held in October or December, but that a meeting would be arranged to consider the Statement of Accounts as soon as the external audits are complete.

36 Working Group Updates

The Chair invited updates from the Working Groups.

Councillor Graham Chapman updated the Committee on the Anti-Fraud Working Group. Items discussed included the focus on fraud against the Council including East Midlands Shared Services and waste, in the last quarter business rates and council tax were targeted, referrals to departments have been made, and the working group received the annual fraud report.

The Working Group would like to request that the Chair of the Audit Committee writes to the Chief Finance Officer and relevant Portfolio Holder to request that they establish a target saving from fraud detection to be included in the budget.

Councillor Jane Lakey provided an update from the Capital Working Group, highlighting that progress being made but there is a need to understand the key projects, statistics and KPIs are being monitored, and there will be updates on the district heating system and Broadmarsh at each meeting

Councillor Andrew Rule provided an update from the Companies Working Group, highlighting that the Group is looking at the progress of evaluations of the companies, and two are expected by December. Work is being done to establish regular standard interactions with the companies, and standard principles for companies to follow in procuring Internal Audit are being established by the relevant officers.

Shail Shah, Head of Audit and Risk, informed the Committee that a report on the Council's companies will be brought to the Committee in the next municipal year, and that the Council will be establishing the minimum level of assurance that it expects from the companies.

Resolved to request that the Chair of the Audit Committee writes to the Chief Finance Officer and relevant Portfolio Holder to request that they establish a target saving from fraud detection to be included in the budget.

37 Audit Committee Annual Report 2020/2021

In the absence of the Chair, Shail Shah, Head of Audit and Risk, introduced the Audit Committee Annual Report 2020/2021. He thanked the Committee members for their work on behalf of the Chair, and highlighted that the Committee has had a positive impact for the Council and has tackled some difficult issues. Appendix A to the report give specific details on what the Committee has achieved, and the report will be submitted to Full Council for consideration.

Members felt that the report focussed on descriptions of progress instead of focussing on outcomes. It needs to be clearer about the differences the Committee has made and the impact of the work that has been carried out.

Resolved to request that the Chair and Vice-Chair, working with the Head of Audit and Risk, amend the report to make it more outcome focussed.

38 Have Your Say Complaints Annual Assurance Report – Including Local Government Ombudsman Annual Letter 2020-21

In the absence of the author, Shail Shah, Head of Audit and Risk, introduced the report which provides details on the complaints received under the Have Your Say process, the statutory Social Care complaints process, and about the School Admissions appeals process, and the decisions made on these complaints by Nottingham City Council, and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the period of 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

Committee members raised the following queries:

- How are the statistics from the complaints used? Does it impact on service planning, or the Medium Term Financial Plan?
- Could more be done to learn from the figures and content?
- How effective is the Have Your Say system in identifying multiple complaints relating to the same issue? How can the effectiveness of the system be improved as it often records issues as completed even though there has been no response?
- Why doesn't the report cover complaints to the Housing Ombudsman?
- What is the reason for the reduction in the number of complaints? Is this impacted by the pandemic?
- Why are missed bins counted as a complaint if they are collected straight away as it has no impact?

Resolved to request an additional report to respond to the questions raised by the Committee.

39 Future meetings dates - Update

The Committee noted that the meeting planned for October 2021 will be held later in the municipal year, with the date to be confirmed.

40 Exclusion of the Public

The Committee decided to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining agenda item(s) in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the basis that, having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, as defined in Paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

41 East Midlands Shared Service Annual Report 2020-21

The Committee discussed the content of the exempt report as detailed in the exempt minutes and noted its content.