

Nottingham City Council

Companies Governance Executive Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Loxley House, Nottingham on 18 January 2022
from 3.00 pm - 4.39 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor David Mellen (Chair)
Councillor Sally Longford (Vice Chair)
Councillor Neghat Khan
Councillor Sam Webster
Councillor Linda Woodings

Absent

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Lisa Black | - Director of Operations, Nottingham Revenues and Benefits Ltd |
| Ian Edward | - Strategic Advisor for Companies |
| Honorary Alderman | - Chair of Board, Nottingham Revenues and Benefits Ltd |
| Brian Grocock | |
| Clive Heaphy | - Corporate Director for Finance and Resources |
| David Marshall | - Principal Accountant, Nottingham Revenues and Benefits Ltd |
| Phil Wye | - Governance Officer |

Call-in

This agenda does not contain and decisions eligible for call-in.

51 Apologies for Absence

None.

52 Declarations of Interests

In relation to items 5 and 7 (Council owned company discussion) in the interests of transparency Councillor Sam Webster declared that he was a Board member of Nottingham Revenues and Benefits Ltd.

53 Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2021 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

54 Work Plan

The Committee noted the work plan for 2021/22 and that a refreshed work plan will be brought to the next meeting.

55 Council owned company discussion - Nottingham Revenues and Benefits Ltd

This item does not contain any decisions which are eligible for call-in.

The Committee received a presentation by Lisa Black, Director of Operations at Nottingham Revenues and Benefits Ltd (NRB), which highlighted the following:

- (a) NRB was formed on 1st November 2014 as a Public Sector owned company. Originally NRB was contracted to Northgate Public Services to deliver Revenue and Benefits services but this contract ended on 31st October 2021 and NRB now works directly for Nottingham City Council (NCC). NRB's primary client is NCC but it also has contracts with other local authorities and private sector companies who deliver revenues and benefits services;
- (b) NRB's Board of Directors meets quarterly and is made up of 3 serving Councillors and 3 external Directors. The Chair is a former Councillor external to NRB and NCC. The Board sets the budget, monitors financial performance, monitors contractual performance, reviews commercial activity and reviews risk;
- (c) governance with clients includes routine monitoring and reporting of performance across a range of key performance indicators, working with clients to respond to changes and forward planning to deal with any changes in policy, practice or local needs;
- (d) NRB's business plan is due to be refreshed in 2022. It will include the 12 key performance measures for the primary contract with NCC, achievement of a sustainable financial position for the Company, commercial growth, the protection of existing jobs and opportunity for new jobs. NRB would like to expand and provide even more value to the Council by taking the opportunity to streamline, consolidate and increase efficiency where possible;
- (e) during the national lockdown, starting in March 2020, 90% of the workforce worked from home and most continue to do so. All services were successfully maintained including telephone services;
- (f) NRB is financially stable with a low risk profile and no outstanding loans, and is forecasting a profit for 2021/22. A risk register is reviewed monthly and annually by the Board;
- (g) NRB has a place in the market due to its stability of resource and skills, and existing customers have confidence in the company and return. It would like to build more of a visible commercial presence with further marketing and website development.

During discussion and in response to questions, the following points were raised:

- (h) NRB currently has no Shareholder Representative on its Board;

- (i) new technology is currently being introduced that will align with NCC's self-service portal for the first time. Other new technology such as chat-bots for online advice are also being considered;
- (j) NRB has always had a strong relationship with the advice sector and will refer customers where necessary. Early intervention is becoming increasingly beneficial to avoid debt recovery measures;
- (k) the Director of NRB attends some working groups at NCC but is not invited to more senior discussions such as Directors' Forums. Regular meetings between the Directors of NCC owned companies and NCC senior officers should be facilitated so that messages are disseminated and knowledge is shared.

Resolved to

- (1) record the thanks of the Committee to Ms Black for her attendance and informative presentation;**
- (2) explore the possibility of meetings for Council-owned company directors to meet together and with Council officers.**

56 Exclusion of the public

The Committee agreed to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining items in accordance with Section 100(A) 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 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, as the sensitive nature of the business affairs under consideration could, if made public, prejudice the ability of the companies concerned to operate effectively in a competitive market.

57 Council owned company discussion - Nottingham Revenues and Benefits Ltd

This item does not contain any decisions that are eligible for call-in.

The Committee received a presentation by Lisa Black, Director of Operations at Nottingham Revenues and Benefits Ltd.

58 Council owned companies - financial update

This item does not contain any decisions that are eligible for call-in.

Ian Edward, Strategic Advisor for Companies, presented the report, updating the Committee on the latest position in respect of Council owned companies.

Resolved to note the update.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure the sub-committee understands the current financial position of the group

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of companies of Nottingham City Council and any risks highlighted in the report for action.

Other options considered:

None.

59 Exempt Minutes

The Committee agreed the exempt minutes of the last meeting held on 21 December 2021 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.