

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, 27 January 2020

PRESENT: Councillor M Charlton (Chair)
Councillor(s): L Green, J McClurey, J McElroy, Mr Stuart Bell (Independent Member), B Jones, D Burnett and S Green

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): G Clark

ASC249 MINUTES SILENCE FOR THE LATE COUNCILLOR NEIL WEATHERLEY

The Committee stood for a minute's silence in remembrance for Councillor Neil Weatherley, who was a member of this Committee and ward member for the Birtley ward, who sadly passed away on 12 December 2019 after a short illness.

ASC250 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 28 October 2019 were approved as a correct record.

ASC251 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

ASC252 QUARTERLY STANDARDS UPDATE

The Committee received the quarterly update highlighting national and local standards issues, and to advise members of national reviews and consultations which may be relevant to their role.

The Committee were advised that the LGA is working closely with a number of other organisations to co-ordinate a programme of work entitled 'Civility in Public Life', aimed at:

- Articulating good standards for anyone engaging in public and political discourse
- Understand the scale and impact of intimidation and abusive behaviour on our membership organisations, and develop recommendations for achieving positive debate and public-decision making on a local level

- To support our members and all democratically elected local representatives in addressing intimidation and abuse, so they can deliver the best on behalf of their communities

The LGA together with the Welsh LGA has published a guide detailing practical steps councillors and councils can take to protect themselves as a person in a public position.

The guide provides general advice on handling intimidation as well as specific situation, for example intimidation over the telephone and at ward surgeries.

The guide can be found at:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Full%20word%20english%20version%20guide%20for%20councillors%20on%20handling%20intimidation%20FINAL.pdf>

- RESOLVED -
- i) That the information be noted
 - ii) That a standards update will be provided on a quarterly basis to the Audit and Standards Committee
 - iii) That the content of the update will vary depending on the local and national picture at that time

ASC253 LOCAL CODE OF GOVERNANCE

The Committee were requested to consider and approve an update version of the Local Code of Governance, based on the CIPFA Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework.

As part of this year's annual review of the Local Code of Governance, the Council's senior management have been requested to make any necessary amendments or additions to the document. As a result some amendments have been made to the Local Code of Governance as follows:

- The refresh of the Workforce Strategy and Plan have been included in the actions for Principle A (sub-principle on demonstrating strong commitments to ethical values).
- The dates on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) have been updated to reflect the current document (Principles C, D & G)
- Reference to Vision 2030 has been deleted in Principle C.
- The Leadership and Management Development Programme have been included in the column 'We demonstrate this by' in Principle E
- Delivery of the Leadership Development Programme and Management Development Programme during 2020 have been added to the actions in Principle E

The revised Local Code of Governance was appended to the main report for information.

- RESOLVED -
- i) That the information be noted
 - ii) That the updated Local Code of Governance is approved

ASC254 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED – that the Committee’s work programme for 2019/20 be noted

ASC255 EXTERNAL AUDITOR: AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report providing an update on Mazars progress in delivering their responsibilities as external auditor.

The report outlined:

- 2019/20 audit
- National publications

The external auditor’s report was appended to the main report at Appendix A.

RESOLVED – that the contents of the external auditor’s report be noted

ASC256 CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT 2019/20: QUARTERLY REPORT TO 31 DECEMBER 2019

The Committee received a report providing an update on developments in Corporate Risk Management during the period 1 October to 31 December 2019 in compliance with the requirements of good corporate governance.

The report covered the quarterly updates on risk management, business continuity and the work of the Council’s Risk and Resilience Group.

The Committee were also advised that in order to enable comparison with other public sector organisations, the Council participated in the 2019 ALARM/CIPFA Risk Management Benchmarking Club.

Membership of the club provides access to a performance measurement tool designed to test the organisation’s performance against the major risk management standards, expectations of inspection bodies and criteria that inform the risk management element of the Annual Governance Statement.

The benchmarking question set is based on ALARM’s National Performance Model for Risk Management in Public Services published in 2009. The model breaks down risk management activity into seven strands and aims to provide an in-depth picture of the maturity of risk management within the organisation.

Scores of levels 1 to 5 are awarded for each strand to identify the level of maturity that the organisation has reached with level 5 being the highest possible score. The categories are as follows:

1. Awareness
2. Happening
3. Working
4. Embedded and Integrated
5. Driving

The Committee were advised that the Council has maintained the same scores as in the previous exercise undertaken in 2018, and a local action plan has been developed to address any areas for improvement identified from the process to further strengthen risk management arrangements.

- RESOLVED -
- i) That the information be noted
 - ii) The Committee endorsed the effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements

ASC257 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

- RESOLVED - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the remaining business in accordance with Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

ASC258 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2019/20 QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT TO 31 DECEMBER 2019

The Committee received a report outlining progress made by the Internal Audit and Risk Service against the audit plan for the financial year 2019/20 and summarising the main findings arising from audit activity throughout the period 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2019.

The report demonstrated the completion of 72% of the audit plan for Gateshead Groups and Services in terms of actual hours against planned hours to date which is on target to achieve the local performance target for completing 97.25% of actual hours against planned hours for the year.

A total of 16 assignments were completed during the period. Of the work completed, the conclusion in four cases was operating well and 12 were satisfactory.

From the reviews carried out to 31 December 2019 audit work was found to be complying with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the Audit Manual.

Indicators in relation to key performance information are all either on or exceeding targets, with the exception of productive or chargeable time, which was recorded at 70% against a target of 73%, which is due to the relatively high number of bank holidays and annual leave during the first three quarters of the year.

RESOLVED - that the information be noted

ASC259 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Monday 9 March 2020 at 10.00 am in the Blaydon Room.

Chair.....