

**GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Thursday, 7 March 2024**

**PRESENT:** Councillor L Kirton (Chair)

Councillor(s): R Mullen, H Kelly, J McElroy, C Ord, Mr Stuart Bell (Independent Member) and Ian Dormer (Independent Member)

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor(s): R Beadle and L Green

**ASC487 MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 January 2024 were approved as a correct record.

**ASC488 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**ASC489 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023/24 - ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK**

The Committee received a report providing an overview of the work to be undertaken to produce the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24 which demonstrates the level of assurance that can be given to the Council's control systems and governance arrangements.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee agreed the Assurance Framework as reported.

**ASC490 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2023/24 QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE**

The Committee received a report to review the Treasury Management 2023/24 performance for the nine months to 31 December 2023 covering investments and borrowing. The Committee were reminded that this is consistent with approved performance management arrangements.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the Treasury Management Performance to 31 December 2023.

**ASC491 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024-25**

The Committee received a report to review the proposed Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Strategy for 2024/25 to 2028/29 prior to consideration by Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee reviewed and endorsed the recommendations on the Treasury Policy and the Treasury Strategy.

**ASC492 LOCAL AUDIT DELAYS: PROPOSALS TO CLEAR THE BACKLOG AND EMBED TIMELY AUDIT**

The Committee received a report providing an update on the Government's consultation around proposals to address the local audit backlog and embed timely audits.

The Committee noted that the joint statement set out three phases of measures to address the audit backlog:

**Phase 1: Reset** – this involves clearing the backlog of historical audit opinions up to and including the financial year 2022/23 by 30 September 2024. This phase is not applicable to Gateshead Council as all audits up to and including 2022/23 have now been completed.

**Phase 2: Recovery** – introducing audit backstop dates to prevent the recurrence of the backlog and allowing audit assurance to be built up over multiple audit cycles.

**Phase 3: Reform** – addressing the systematic challenges in the local audit systems to embed timely financial reporting and audit.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the report.

**ASC493 MAZARS EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee received a verbal update highlighting that Gateshead had produced good quality accounts at Phase 1 as expected. The Committee also noted that value for money work is to be concluded in due course.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the verbal update.

**Chair.....**