

Brighton & Hove City Council

Audit & Standards Committee

4.00pm 24 January 2023

Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall

Minutes

Present: Councillor Wilkinson (Chair) Hugh-Jones (Group Spokesperson), Atkinson, Meadows, Shanks, Simson, West and Yates

Independent Persons present: Helen Aston

Part One

30 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

30a Declarations of substitutes

30.1 There were none.

30b Declarations of interests

30.2 There were none.

30c Exclusion of the press and public

30.3 In accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Committee considered whether the public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any item of business on the grounds that it is likely in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during it, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act.

30.4 **Resolved** - That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting.

31 MINUTES

31.1 **Resolved** – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 29th November 2022 be approved and signed as the correct record.

32 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

32.1 The Chair provided the following communications:

“Today is Helen Aston’s last Audit & Standards Committee meeting. So I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge that and to thank her for her very considerable contribution to this Committee, and to the Council generally, over the last 4 years of her tenure.

The role of Independent Person is a challenging one, which requires a wide-ranging skillset. The Council’s Independent Person’s need to have a clear understanding of the member complaints regime and to be confident when giving a steer to the Monitoring Officer at key points in the process. That steer needs to be clear and pragmatic: sensitive to the nuances of the context and aware of the challenges cllrs are under while being sure to cut through to the key issues raised by complainants. I am informed that Helen’s contribution in relation to complaints has been consistently reliable and clear and that she has been very helpful in the project of reviewing complaints in a fair and even-handed way.

We are lucky here to consistently attract Independent Person’s who are of a very high calibre, notwithstanding the significant time commitment the role entails. The professional skillset Helen has brought to this role has been equally useful in enabling her to apply an educated perspective to the Council’s approach to discharging the core audit functions of this Committee. She has consistently used the understanding she’s acquired in her professional job to review and gently challenge established approaches in the areas reported to the Committee. Her comments have been consistently well-informed, clear and practical. I’m sure that I speak on behalf of all Groups when I wish her well and thank her for her contribution”.

32.2 Councillors Hugh-Jones, Yates Meadows and Atkinson added their thanks for Helene Aston’s contribution to the council in the role of Independent Person.

33 CALL OVER

33.1 The following items on the agenda were reserved for discussion:

- Item 36: Formal Approval of the Risk Management Framework 2022/23
- Item 38: External Audit: Annual Report 2021/22
- Item 39: Members Allowances Update
- Item 40: Annual Review of Standards related matters including Member Complaints

33.2 The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that the items listed above had been reserved for discussion and that the following reports on the agenda with the recommendations therein had been approved and adopted:

- Item 37: Independent External Assessment of Orbis Internal Audit

34 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

No public representation items were received.

35 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

No items from Members were received.

36 FORMAL APPROVAL OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2022/23

- 40.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Governance, People & Resources that provided the committee with an oversight of the Brighton & Hove City Council's current Risk Management Framework with a view to seeking their approval.
- 40.2 Councillors Simson, Yates, Meadows, Shanks, Hugh-Jones, West and Helen Aston asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.
- 40.3 **Resolved-**
- 1) That the committee approves the Risk Management Framework as set out in Appendix 1.
 - 2) That the committee notes the current strategic risks and committees they are reported to as set out in Appendix 2.
 - 3) That the committee notes that internal audit of risk management conducted in 2022/23 provided 'Substantial Assurance'. This opinion means that controls are in place and are operating as expected to manage key risks to the achievement of system or service objectives.

37 INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF ORBIS INTERNAL AUDIT**37.1 Resolved-**

- 1) That the Committee notes the findings from the external review report, including those areas identified where opportunities for further improvement may exist for the future.

38 EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

- 40.1 The Committee considered the external auditor's (Grant Thornton's) Annual Report for the year ending 31 March 2022 reports on the council's value for money arrangements and comments on financial sustainability, governance arrangements and arrangements for securing economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the use of its resources.
- 40.2 Councillors Yates, Atkinson, Meadows, Hugh-Jones and West asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.
- 40.3 **Resolved-**
- 1) That the Audit & Standards Committee notes the external auditor's Annual (Value for Money) Report for the financial year ending 31 March 2022 including the auditor's recommendations and management comments.

39 MEMBER ALLOWANCES UPDATE

- 39.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Governance, People & Resources that update the Committee on actions taken in response to Committee

recommendations in June 2022, having considered the findings of the Internal Audit investigation into claims by members under the Scheme for Member Allowances.

39.2 Councillors Meadows, Yates, Shanks and Simson asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

39.3 **Resolved-**

1) That Committee note the contents of the Report.

40 ANNUAL REVIEW OF STANDARDS-RELATED MATTERS, INCLUDING MEMBER COMPLAINTS

40.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Governance People & Resources that provided a review of Standards-related matters, including a review of complaints received in during 2022 alleging that Members have breached the Code of Conduct for Members.

40.2 Councillors Meadows, West, Simson, Atkinson, Yates, Shanks and Hugh-Jones plus Helen Aston and David Bradly asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

40.3 **Resolved-** That the Committee note the contents of the Report and refers it to full Council for information.

41 ITEMS REFERRED FOR COUNCIL

40.1 No items were referred to Full Council for information.

42 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

40.1 No items were requested for a future meeting.

The meeting concluded at 6.45pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of