

## Crawley Borough Council

### Minutes of Audit Committee

Monday, 30 September 2019 at 6.30 pm

#### Councillors Present:

M W Pickett (Chair)

J Millar-Smith (Vice-Chair)

R D Burrett, M G Jones and K Sudan

#### Officers Present:

Gillian Edwards                      Audit and Risk Manager

Karen Hayes                              Head of Corporate Finance

Mez Matthews                            Democratic Services Officer

Stuart Small                              Investigations Officer

#### 1. Disclosures of Interest

The following disclosures of interests were made:

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Item and Minute</b>	<b>Type and Nature of Disclosure</b>
Councillor Burrett	Progress Report and Risk Management (Minute 4)	Personal Interest – He was a West Sussex County Councillor
Councillor Jones	Progress Report and Risk Management (Minute 4)	Personal Interest – He was a West Sussex County Councillor
Councillor Sudan	Progress Report and Risk Management (Minute 4)	Personal Interest – She was a West Sussex County Councillor

#### 2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 23 July 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **3. Fraud and Investigation Team Report**

The Committee considered report FIN/480 of the Operational Benefits and Corporate Fraud Manager, which focused on activity for the period from 2 July 2019 to 11 September 2019. The Investigations Officer presented the report and advised that the Team had continued to perform successfully.

The Committee was provided with details of cases investigated and the Team's investigations, whilst a discussion took place on the Team's work generally and the role they played in deterring fraud. The Committee sought and received clarification on a number of points raised, including the restrictions in place regarding the Right to Buy Scheme.

The Committee discussed the Corporate Management Team's response to the Committee's request for another Housing Amnesty. The Committee received clarification regarding the ongoing work being undertaken around the five year tenancies and tenancy renewals as well as the Country-wide campaign which was due to take place in the next six months. Whilst the Committee was pleased to be informed that Crawley Borough Council would be involved in the County-wide initiative, it was suggested that the Council issue a press release regarding housing fraud to remind the public of the criteria regarding housing related discounts/policies, and encourage them to report suspected fraud. It was moved by Councillor Jones (seconded by Councillor Millar-Smith) that such a press release be issued.

The proposal upon being put to the Committee, was declared to be CARRIED.

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the Investigation Team Report be noted.
2. That a press release be issued regarding housing fraud to remind the public of the criteria regarding housing related discounts/policies and encourage them to report suspected fraud.

### **4. Progress Report and Risk Management**

The Committee considered report FIN/481 of the Audit and Risk Manager. The purpose of the report was primarily to update the Committee on the progress made towards the completion of the 2019/2020 Audit Plan. The report also included an update on the Council's Strategic Risks.

The Committee discussed and noted the Audit Plan Reviews in progress, along with other work as detailed in the report. The Audit and Risk Manager took the opportunity to brief the Committee on the work as detailed in the report and, in relation to the following areas, the Committee:

#### Work Completed in the Current Period:

- Received background information relation to the Publication Scheme Review Audit.

#### Progress Report (Appendix A to the report):

- Noted that information relating to the Business Impact Assessments Audit, Business Continuity Audit and Procurement Audit would be brought to the Committee meeting in November.
- Received clarification regarding the remit of the Business Impact Assessment Audit.

The Committee raised some queries regarding the Community Grants Follow-Up Audit which had been considered by the Committee at its previous meeting (report FIN/475 and Minute 4 of the 23 July 2019 Audit Committee refer). The Audit and Risk Manager informed the Committee that due to unforeseen staff absence it had not been possible to provide this Committee with a further update on this follow-up audit. Information would however be brought back to the Committee meeting in November, and would include the results from an investigation of a select sample of grants, how systems had been changed to ensure their robustness and information regarding the segregation of duties. The Audit and Risk Manager confirmed that Cabinet Members would receive a copy of any final report following an audit review relating to their portfolio, not just those which identified high priority findings.

The Committee discussed the update provided on Strategic Risk Management. Following queries from the Committee relating to the following areas, the Committee:

Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity:

- Noted that the Audit and Risk Manager had worked with the Head of Digital and Transformation regarding the level of controls needed. The Head of Digital and Transformation understood the problems which had occurred during the 1<sup>st</sup> Phase of the works and had put in place controls to ensure that those issues were not repeated during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase.
- Was informed that an audit would be undertaken in the future, if appropriate, to review the work.
- Noted that members of the Audit Team attended the Corporate Project Assurance Group and the Town Hall Board to ensure that any risks associated with works undertaken were managed.

Recruitment, Retention and Succession Planning:

- Was informed that, the Head of Corporate Finance did not have the exact percentage of staff turnover to hand, and therefore that information would be provided to the Committee via email.
- Noted that since there was no longer a prescribed retirement age, the age at which each staff member retired was determined on an individual basis.
- Succession planning was in place to combat the ageing population of the Council's workforce.

**RESOLVED**

That the Committee receive the report and note progress to date, as at 6 September 2019.

**Closure of Meeting**

With the business of the Audit Committee concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.05 pm

**Chair**