

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held in the Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn, on Thursday, 12 September, 2019 at 6:00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor J Gallen (Chairman)

Aldermen J Baird, A Grehan and S P Porter

Councillors S Carson, S Eastwood, A P Ewing, A Gowan, S Hughes, J Lavery, S Lee, John Palmer and N Trimble

IN ATTENDANCE:

Head of Audit and Risk
Audit and Risk Manager
Performance Improvement Officer
Risk Officer
Member Services Officer

Commencement of the Meeting

The Chairman, Councillor J Gallen, welcomed those present to the meeting and proceeded to outline the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

1. **Apologies**

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor A Givan, Alderman S Martin, Councillor G McCleave, the Chief Executive, the Policy Officer and Ms C Kane, Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO).

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Report from Performance Improvement Officer**

3.1 **Performance Improvement Objectives and Associated KPIs
– 1st Quarter Review**

Members were provided with a copy of:

- (a) a quarterly monitoring document, which was an update on all the projects that would demonstrate improvement against the 2019/20 Performance Improvement Objectives (KPIs) and covered the period April to June 2019 inclusive; and
- (b) a report taken from the 'Performance Manager' System (Dashboard) detailing KPIs for the organisation for the period April to June 2019.

3.1 Performance Improvement Objectives and Associated KPIs
– 1st Quarter Review (Contd)

It was proposed by Councillor S Eastwood, seconded by Councillor S Lee and agreed to recommend that the above reports be approved.

3.2 Complaints Report

Members were provided with a copy of a comparative report taken from the Council's Customer Care System detailing the number of comments, complaints and compliments in Quarter 1 of 2019/20. It was proposed by Councillor S Eastwood, seconded by Councillor A P Ewing and agreed to recommend that this report be approved.

3.3 Performance Improvement Report 2018/19

Members were provided with a copy of the Performance Improvement Report for 2018/19, which had been written in order to meet the requirements of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 and which required to be published by 30 September, 2019. The Chairman, Councillor J Gallen, commended the Officers involved in the production of this very comprehensive report.

Councillor A P Ewing referred to the Public Realm in the city centre being 'on track' and congratulated those Council Officers and contractors involved in this. The Head of Audit and Risk agreed to convey these sentiments accordingly.

Alderman S P Porter asked if there had been a trend over the last number of years of absence increasing over the summer period. The Head of Audit and Risk agreed that this would be investigated and, if it was the case, reference to this would be included in the Performance Improvement Report.

It was proposed by Councillor S Carson, seconded by Alderman A Grehan and agreed to recommend that the Performance Improvement Report for 2018/19 be approved.

The Performance Improvement Officer left the meeting at this point (6.18 pm).

4. Confidential Business

The matters contained in the confidential report would be dealt with "In Committee" due to containing information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

"In Committee"

It was proposed by Councillor S Lee seconded by Councillor A P Ewing and agreed that the following matters be considered "in committee", in the absence of members of the press and public being present.

4.1 Report from Risk Officer

4.1.1 Corporate Risk Register Update

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of a Corporate Risk Dashboard, which illustrated the current risks and residual heat map, together with a copy of original and refreshed Bribery Risk Action Plans.

Alderman J Baird referred to the Planning Risk not now being deemed as a corporate risk and being managed at directorate level and voiced his opposition to this change. Following discussion, it was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Alderman S P Porter and agreed to recommend that CMT be advised that the Planning Risk should remain as a corporate risk at present and that the Governance and Audit Committee be provided with the rationale for suggesting it be managed at directorate level for consideration.

The Head of Audit and Risk agreed to respond to Alderman A Grehan in respect of her comments regarding the requirement for the Council to have a Data Protection Officer and how this post was to be filled in the future.

4.1.2 Brexit Risk Register

The Risk Officer set out in her report background and key issues relating to the Brexit Risk Register and Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of a Brexit Risk Dashboard.

4.1.3 Cross-Party Brexit Working Group

Members were reminded that, at the Council meeting held on 23 July, 2019, it had been agreed that the following Notice of Motion, in the name of Councillor S Eastwood, be referred the relevant Committee for consideration:

“That this Council resolves to establish a cross-party Brexit working group in order to support local planning and contingencies in relation to the council’s responsibilities arising from all Brexit scenarios including no deal”.

At the Council meeting, Alderman A Grehan had also asked that Members be provided with information on work that had been carried out by the Council in relation to Brexit and, accordingly, a report had been issued by the Chief Executive on 12 August, 2019 (further copy of which Members were provided with). The Risk Officer set out in her report, further developments that had taken place since 12 August. Members commended Officers in respect of the work that had been done thus far regarding Brexit.

It was proposed by Councillor S Eastwood and seconded by Alderman A Grehan that a cross-party Brexit working group be established, as outlined in the above Notice of Motion. A number of Members voiced their opposition to this proposal as they considered it could generate additional work for no reward and that the

4.1.3 Cross-Party Brexit Working Group (Contd)

Governance and Audit Committee was the correct forum to consider Brexit-related issues. On a vote being taken, the proposal in the name of Councillor S Eastwood was declared “lost”, the voting being 4 in favour of and 9 against the proposal.

Following discussion, it was agreed to recommend that (a) Members continue to be advised of Brexit-related information via the Brexit folder on SharePoint; (b) Brexit Update be a standing item in future reports; and (c) the Chairman, Councillor J Gallen, call a special meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee if and when this was deemed necessary to update Members on Brexit.

The Risk Officer left the meeting at this point (6.52 pm).

4.2 Report from Audit and Risk Manager

4.2.1 Internal Audit Progress Report – September 2019

Alderman J Baird left, and returned to, the meeting during consideration of this item of business (6.56 pm and 6.58 pm respectively).

Members were provided with a copy of the Internal Audit Progress Report – September 2019, which summarised internal audit work and progress against the Operational Plan since the last meeting of the Committee on 13 June, 2019. It was noted that a copy of any Internal Audit Reports referred to in the progress report were provided in full on SharePoint and this would be the case going forward.

Alderman A Grehan referred to the “Follow-Up of Overdue Recommendations Tracker” section of the progress report and commended those Officers who had been involved in its design.

It was proposed by Alderman A Grehan, seconded by Councillor J Lavery and agreed to recommend that the Internal Audit Progress Report – September 2019 be approved.

4.3 Report from Policy Officer

In the absence of the Policy Officer, his report was presented by the Head of Audit and Risk.

4.3.1 Acceptance of the Six Monthly Statements of Assurance

Members having been provided with a copy of the Six Monthly Statements of Assurance for the Environmental Services Directorate, Leisure and Community Wellbeing Directorate, Service Support Directorate and Service Transformation Directorate, it was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Councillor S Carson and agreed to recommend that they be approved.

Verbal Items

4.4 Appointment of Independent Member of the Governance and Audit Committee
Councillor John Palmer

At the request of Councillor J Palmer, the Head of Audit and Risk provided an update in respect of the appointment of the Independent Member of the Governance and Audit Committee.

4.5 Governance Training for Elected Members
Alderman J Baird

Following a query by Alderman J Baird, the Chairman, Councillor J Gallen and the Head of Audit and Risk confirmed that governance training would be offered to all Members of Council on dates to be arranged in the coming months.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor N Trimble, seconded by Councillor A P Ewing, and agreed to come out of committee and normal business was resumed.

5. Any Other Business

5.1 Reports on Money-Saving Projects/Measures
Alderman S P Porter

Alderman S P Porter referred to a number of recent measures taken, and projects embarked upon, by the Council which should bring about financial savings and stated that it was important that Elected Members be kept informed as to whether such savings were being achieved. The Head of Audit and Risk advised that there was an onus on the various Committees of Council to report back on efficiencies made and such items should be factored into the forward agendas for Committees.

Conclusion of the Meeting

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chairman, Councillor J Gallen, thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

There being no further business, the meeting was terminated at 7.12 pm.

Mayor/Chairman