

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, 13 December, 2018 at 6:00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor R T Beckett Chairman)

Deputy Mayor
Councillor A Grehan

Aldermen W A Leathem and S Martin

Councillors J Baird, B Bloomfield MBE, S Carson, J Gallen,
A McIntyre, B Mallon, T Morrow and S Skillen

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive
Audit and Risk Manager
Performance Improvement Officer
Policy Officer
Risk Officer
Member Services Officer

Northern Ireland Audit Office

Mrs C Kane, Director

Commencement of the Meeting

The Chairman, Councillor R T Beckett, welcomed those present to the meeting, which was the first Governance and Audit Committee attended by the new Chief Executive since his appointment. He then 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 U Mackin, and Councillors A P Ewing, A Girvin and O Gawith.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Minutes**

It was proposed by Councillor S Carson, seconded by Councillor J Baird and agreed that the following minutes be confirmed and signed:

3. Minutes (Contd)

- (a) meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on 13 September, 2018, as adopted by Council at its meeting held on 25 September, 2018; and
- (b) special meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on 26 September, 2018, as adopted by Council at its meeting held on 23 October, 2018.

4. Report from Chief Executive

It was agreed that the report and recommendations of the Chief Executive be adopted, subject to any decisions recorded below.

Items for Decision

4.1 Report from Performance Improvement Officer

Members were provided with a copy of a report prepared by the Performance Improvement Officer containing the following matters:

4.1.1 Performance Improvement Associated KPIs – 2nd Quarter 2018/19 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 2018/19 Performance Improvement Objectives (KPIs) and covered the period July to September 2018 inclusive; and
- (b) a report taken from the 'Performance Manager' System (Dashboard) detailing KPIs for each service within the organisation. This was in summary format and detailed the KPI results for the period July to September 2018 inclusive.

It was proposed by Councillor S Skillen, seconded by Councillor T Morrow and agreed to recommend that the above reports be approved.

4.1.2 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 Quarters 1 and 2 of 2018/19. It was proposed by Councillor S Skillen, seconded by Councillor T Morrow and agreed to recommend that this report be approved.

4.1.3 GDPR Agreement with Decision Time

Members were provided with a copy of a Data Processor Agreement for Decision Time, the provider of the Council's Customer Care System. This was in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which had come into force a

4.1.3 GDPR Agreement with Decision Time (Contd)

number of months ago, superseding the existing data protection laws and introducing tighter controls and a more risk-based approach for processing personal information and protecting the rights and freedoms of individuals. It was proposed by Councillor S Skillen, seconded by Councillor T Morrow and agreed to recommend that the Data Processor Agreement for Decision Time be approved.

Councillor J Baird left the meeting at this point (6.05 pm).

4.1.4 ReportAll Invoice

The Performance Improvement Officer reminded Members that, in April 2017, the Council had agreed to purchase the ReportAll facility on a trial basis and usage of the App had been reviewed biannually. This had been a well-used App over the past 18 months, with approximately 520 enquiries made to the Council during that time. It was proposed by Councillor J Gallen, seconded by Councillor S Carson and agreed to recommend that the contract with ReportAll be extended on a permanent basis, at a cost of £300 per month, which would be funded from a central code within the Support Service's budget.

4.1.5 ReportAll Competition Update

Members noted that a competition had been running in the recently published Citywide magazine to promote and encourage use of the ReportAll App. The competition would finish on 14 December, 2018, with an Amazon Echo being given as the prize.

Councillor J Baird returned to the meeting at this point (6.07 pm).

4.1.6 NIAO Letter on Performance Audit

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of a final report and certificate of compliance recently issued by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO).

At this stage, the Chairman, Councillor R T Beckett, welcomed to the meeting Mrs C Kane, Director, NIAO. Mrs Kane made a verbal presentation in relation to the report, which was also noted by Members.

4.1.7 Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman's Report on Complaints Activity for 2017-18

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman's (NIPSO) Report on Complaints Activity for 2017-18. The report stated that five complaints about Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council had been made to NIPSO during 2017-18 (three relating to Planning, one to Building Control and one to Environmental Health). These had not been investigated and had been dismissed at the first stage, once the Ombudsman had confirmed that the complainant had exhausted the Council's internal procedures; however, this had not been explained in the report. The

4.1.7 Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman's Report on Complaints Activity for 2017-18 (Contd)

Performance Improvement Officer advised that she had been in discussions with NIPSO requesting that it be made clear in future reports if complaints had not been investigated.

The Performance Improvement Officer left the meeting at this point (6.13 pm).

4.2 Report from Risk Officer

Members were provided with a copy of a report prepared by the Risk Officer containing the following matters:

4.2.1 Corporate Risk Register Update

Members were provided with, and agreed to recommend approval of, a copy of:

- (a) the current Corporate Risk Register and associated Risk Action Plans;
- (b) a summary of changes made subsequent to the last meeting of the Committee; and
- (c) a comparison chart of the risks in terms of progress made since the last review.

Members noted from the Risk Officer's report, information on key changes to the Corporate Risk Register, as well as an update in relation to absenteeism.

4.2.2 Corporate Cyber Security Risk Register

Members noted that, further to the inclusion of Cyber Security as an independent risk on the Corporate Risk Register, a bespoke Corporate Cyber Risk Register was being developed, based on the National Cyber Security Centre's "10 Steps to Cyber Security". These were good practice guidelines suggesting further progress and investment to deliver a robust information security regime to protect organisations against efforts to conduct malicious attempts to damage, disrupt or gain unauthorised access to information assets, computer systems, networks or devices.

Councillor J Gallen asked if the Council could make residents aware of cyber security and measures they could take. In response, the Risk Officer confirmed that, from a business continuity perspective, the Council had a duty to advise the public and stated that this could be done, possibly through publication on the Council's website. The Chief Executive also agreed that the Council's Economic Development Team could ascertain if this was something that businesses would want from the Council.

4.2.3 Business Continuity Update

Councillor A McIntyre arrived to the meeting at this point (6.19 pm).

The Risk Officer set out in her report, an update in relation to Business Continuity. Members noted that a Business Continuity Steering Group had been

4.2.3 Business Continuity Update (Contd)

established to ensure a robust framework and procedures were supported, promoted and implemented in each service area. The first meeting had been held on 4 December, 2018, with a project plan established, and the next meeting was due to be held in February 2019.

The Risk Officer left the meeting at this point (6.21 pm).

4.3 Report from Policy Officer

Members were provided with a copy of a report prepared by the Policy Officer containing the following matters:

4.3.1 Review of Action Points from Governance and Audit Committee Meeting of 13 September, 2018

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of a table detailing progress made towards the actions agreed at the Governance and Audit Committee meeting held on 13 September, 2018.

4.3.2 Revised Whistleblowing Policy

The Policy Officer reported that the Council's Whistleblowing Policy had been enacted in December 2016 and it had been agreed at that time that it be reviewed within two years. In the intervening time, there had been changes made to the structure of the Council and to the law, both of which had been accounted for in the revised draft. Legally, there had been two major changes accounted for within the revised policy and these were detailed in the Policy Officer's report, as well as a number of changes made to the layout of the Policy.

Members having been provided with a copy of the revised Whistleblowing Policy, it was proposed by Councillor T Morrow, seconded by Alderman W A Leatham, and agreed to recommend that it be approved.

4.3.3 NIAO Report: The UK Border: How Prepared is Northern Ireland for Exiting the EU?

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of, a copy of the above report, produced by the NIAO, on how prepared Northern Ireland was as a whole for exiting the EU in March 2019.

4.4 Report from Audit and Risk Manager

Members were provided with a copy of a report prepared by the Audit and Risk Manager containing the following matter:

4.4.1 NIAO Summary Report of All Councils

The Audit and Risk Manager advised that the NIAO had released a general report to all councils on 4 September, 2018. The Local Government Auditor published her report on the exercise of her functions in the year to 31 March,

4.4.1 NIAO Summary Report of All Councils (Contd)

2018. This included the audit of the 2016/17 financial accounts of the 11 councils, as well as the audit and assessment of the councils' performance improvement responsibilities for 2017/18. Members were provided with, and noted the contents of:

- (a) the NIAO media release with an overview of its report;
- (b) key findings from the report; and
- (c) a summary of what the Audit and Risk Manager considered to be pertinent points.

It was noted that a copy of the complete NIAO report was available to Members on SharePoint or on the NIAO website.

5. Confidential Business

It was agreed that the report and recommendations of the Chief Executive be adopted, subject to any decisions recorded below.

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 B Mallon, seconded by Councillor B Bloomfield and agreed that the following matters be considered "in committee", in the absence of members of the press and public being present.

5.1 Report from Policy Officer

Members were provided with a copy of a report prepared by the Policy Officer containing the following matters:

5.1.1 Final Statements of Assurance for Directorates 2017/18

Members were provided with, and noted the contents of a copy of Assurance Statements from each of the Directorates for the period April to October 2018.

5.1.2 Data Protection

Members noted an update in relation to a recent data protection issue.

5.2 Report from Audit and Risk Manager

Members were provided with a copy of a report prepared by the Audit and Risk Manager containing the following matters:

5.2.1 Northern Ireland Audit Office Presentations

The Policy Officer left the meeting during consideration of this item of business (6.37 pm).

Members were provided with a copy of the following:

- (a) covering letter with Annual Audit Letter;
- (b) Final Annual Audit Letter for 2017/18; and
- (c) Final Report To Those Charged With Governance.

Mrs C Kane having made a verbal presentation in relation to the above documents, it was proposed by Councillor B Bloomfield, seconded by Alderman S Martin and agreed to recommend that they be approved.

Councillor J Gallen made reference to the decision taken by the Committee, at its special meeting held on 26 September, 2018, that Mrs C Kane would be invited to present the Final Annual Audit Letter to a future meeting of full Council. The Chief Executive agreed to make the necessary arrangements for Mrs Kane's attendance at a future meeting of Council, now that the Final Audit Letter had been approved.

The Chairman, Councillor R T Beckett, having thanked Mrs Kane for her attendance, she left the meeting at this point (6.43 pm). The Chief Executive also left the meeting at this point (6.43 pm).

5.2.2 Recommendation Trackers

The Chief Executive returned to the meeting during consideration of this item of business (6.44 pm).

Members were provided with a copy of Recommendation Trackers for various Council Departments, as well as for the NIAO. It was proposed by Councillor J Baird, seconded by Councillor S Skillen and agreed to recommend that the Recommendation Trackers be approved and that progress on implementation in the various Departments be noted.

In response to comments by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor A Grehan, it was agreed to recommend that Members be given access to tracker reports via SharePoint.

5.2.3 Internal Audit Reports

Alderman S Martin left the meeting at this point (6.49 pm).

Members were provided with a number of Internal Audit Reports. It was proposed by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor A Grehan, seconded by Councillor T Morrow and agreed to recommend that the Planning Enforcement Internal Audit Report be approved. It was proposed by Alderman W A Leathem, seconded by Councillor A McIntyre and agreed to recommend that the Internal Audit Reports in respect of the Northern Ireland Business Start Up Programme and the Cash Handling Audit be approved.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor J Baird, seconded by Councillor B Mallon and agreed to come out of committee and normal business was resumed.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Councillors' Registration with the Information Commissioner's Office as a Data Controller
Councillor S Carson

Councillor S Carson referred to the fact that Members had previously been requested by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to register as a Data Controller. Councillor Carson advised that he had recently received an email asking that he re-register for 2019. Given that Members had registered in a number of ways, Councillor Carson asked that Officers give consideration to how there could be a more consistent approach for Members to register in 2019.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor A Grehan, advised that the National Association of Councillors (NAC) had written to the ICO regarding this matter and suggested that contact be made with the NAC to ascertain its findings.

Given that there was to be a Local Government Election in 2019, Councillor J Baird suggested that information on registering with the ICO as a Data Controller be included in induction packs for new Members.

6.2 Absenteeism
Councillor T Morrow

The Chief Executive took note of comments by Councillor T Morrow regarding Members' concerns in relation to absenteeism and stated that this matter was discussed at every meeting of the Corporate Management Team.

6.3 Presentation of Final Annual Audit Letter to Council Meeting
Alderman W A Leathem

Alderman W A Leathem voiced his concerns in relation to the merits of the NIAO presenting its Final Annual Audit Letter to a meeting of full Council, given that it had already been presented to this Committee, was on SharePoint for all Elected Members to access and would be published on the Council's website. He enquired if this was to be a one-off presentation or if Councillor J Gallen, who had made the proposal at the special meeting in September, intended this to be an annual presentation. Councillor Gallen stated that he understood this would be a one-off presentation. The NIAO made some important points and he considered it would be beneficial for all Members to be aware of those and have time to go through the report.

In response to a query by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor A Grehan, the Audit and Risk Manager confirmed that priority one and priority two recommendations contained in the NIAO report would be included in the relevant Departmental Trackers.

6.4 Season's Greetings
Chairman, Councillor R T Beckett

The Chairman, Councillor R T Beckett, wished Members and Officers a Merry Christmas. He asked that, on behalf of himself and Members of the Governance and Audit Committee, the Chief Executive send an email to staff thanking them for their hard work and efforts throughout the year, without which the Council would not have achieved a successful audit.

There being no further business, the meeting was terminated at 7.08 pm.

Mayor/Chairman