

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATE COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY, 22ND MARCH, 2018, 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Barbara Blake (Chair), Eddie Griffith (Vice-Chair), Gina Adamou, Charles Adje, Isidoros Diakides, Adam Jogee and Viv Ross

204. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to agenda Item 1 as shown on the agenda in respect of filming at this meeting, and Members noted the information contained therein.

205. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS (IF ANY)

Apologies for absence were received by Cllr's Engert & Berryman.

206. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no such items.

207. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

208. DEPUTATIONS / PETITIONS / PRESENTATIONS / QUESTIONS

There were no such items.

209. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Corporate Committee held on 30 January 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

210. EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2017/18

The Committee considered the report on the Audit Plan, presented by Leigh Lloyd-Thomas, BDO. The report set out the expected key issues to be covered by the external audit, the scope of the work, the level of materiality, Group matters, and the external auditors' statement of independence and fee summary. Mr Lloyd-Thomas explained the benchmark percentage for materiality and the Committee discussed the presented audit risk areas within the plan.

In particular the Committee focused on the area of the Council's sustainable finances. It was noted that the savings required to offset the identified funding gaps from 2019/20 to 2022/23 would present a significant challenge in the coming years.

Mr Lloyd-Thomas advised the Committee that they could contact him if there were other areas of audit risk that they wanted to suggest.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report be noted.

211. GRANTS REPORT 2016/17

The Committee considered the Grants Report 2016/17, presented by Leigh Lloyd-Thomas, BDO. The report summarised the main issues highlighted from the certification work of grant claims and returns for the year ending March 2017.

The Committee considered details of each of the 3 grant claims and returns focused on within the report – Housing benefit subsidy, pooling of housing capital receipts and teachers pensions. In relation to housing benefit subsidy it was noted that a large number of errors had been found and the Committee discussed the various benefit types affected by these errors. In response to the Committee's concern it was highlighted that a contributing factor was training and a considerable back log of claims but Mr Lloyd-Thomas assured the Members that improvements were gradually being made and felt confident that with time, training and a steady team this issue should improve. The Committee agreed that this was an area that they wanted to keep monitoring.

In response to a question regarding the retained right to buy funds Mr Lloyd-Thomas updated the Committee on management comments received subsequent to the publication of BDO's report. It was noted that the Housing Strategy team would be setting up two large scale housing delivery company's with the purpose of utilising the funds within the designated timescale so that these resources were not lost.

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the contents of the report for information

212. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN FINDING

The Committee considered the report as presented by Chris Liffen, Executive Director of Property at Homes for Haringey. Mr Liffen gave his apologies to the Committee and stated that Homes for Haringey accepted the errors in relation to the case.

After presenting details of the case it was noted that recommendations made by the Ombudsman had been accepted and would be actioned within 3 months of the date of the report. This included a further report to the Cabinet Member of Housing Regeneration & Planning.

The Committee raised its concerns over the clearly highlighted issues around complaints procedures and processes. Mr Liffen notified the Committee that changes had been implemented including the creation of a new senior role within its Mechanical & Electrical service, introduction of a new major incidents process along with new performance indicators. It was also noted that properties with similar water supply issues were not currently being let out.

The Committee was pleased that complaints and member enquires had been added to the internal audit plans of both the Council & Homes for Haringey for review in the next financial year. However when discussing the Ombudsman's recommendations in relation to compensation to Ms X it was commented that the suggested amounts were more of a refund for expenses incurred rather than compensation. It was suggested that an additional ex gratia payment be made considering the severity of the case. The Committee agreed that this was something that should be considered.

RESOLVED

That the Committee:

- Note the outcome of the Ombudsman's investigation contained in his report dated 31st January 2018.
- Accept the Ombudsman's Recommendations relating to the need to make compensatory payments to Ms X.
- Authorises officers to make compensatory payments to Ms X in accordance with the Recommendations made by the Ombudsman in his report. ***The Committee also agreed that there should be consideration as to whether an additional ex gratia payment was appropriate.***
- Notes the subsequent actions undertaken by Homes for Haringey to rectify the situation, and prevent a recurrence.

213. THE ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN AND INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY 2018/19

The Committee considered the report on the draft internal audit plan for 2017/18 and internal audit strategy, as presented by Vanessa Bateman, Interim Head of Audit and Risk Management. The report set out the way in which the internal audit plan was devised, the internal audit strategy and the proposed audit plan.

It was noted that there was an additional 10 extra areas of audit that had not been included on the plan but that work was being done on additional days that could be used to bridge the gap.

In response to a question regarding the proposed computer audit of the Shared Digital arrangements it was noted that work was being done with the Head of Audit of the other Councils on the 2018/19 plan. It was agreed that a summary of the draft plan and the proposed areas of work be presented to the Committee again at the first meeting of the new municipal year for the benefit of its new members.

Action: Head of Audit & Risk Management

RESOLVED

- That the Corporate Committee review and approve the Internal Audit strategy.
- That the Corporate Committee review and approve the Annual Internal Audit Plan for 2018/19.

214. ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF AN URGENT NATURE

The Chair and Vice Chair both received a vote of thanks from the Committee Members for their hard work throughout the year.

CHAIR: Councillor Barbara Blake

Signed by Chair

Date