

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Audit and Governance Committee** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, NG24 1BY on Wednesday, 25 September 2024 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor S Forde (Vice-Chair)

Councillor P Farmer, Councillor J Hall, Councillor S Haynes, Councillor J Kellas, Councillor M Shakeshaft and Councillor T Thompson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor P Harris (Chair), Councillor R Cozens, Councillor A Freeman, Councillor S Michael and Councillor C Penny and Mr C Richardson (Non-Voting Co-Optee)

102 NOTIFICATION TO THOSE PRESENT THAT THE MEETING WILL BE RECORDED AND STREAMED ONLINE

Other than the Council recording in accordance with usual practice, there were no declarations of intention to record the meeting.

103 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor Forde declared an interest as a Director on the Board of Active4Today.

104 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 JULY 2024

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2024 to have an additional sentence to minute 97 after the second paragraph to read 'Members expressed their concern at the rise in numbers of complaints.' The minutes be approved as a correct record with the inclusion of the additional sentence to minute 97 and signed by the Vice-Chair.

105 PROJECTED GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTFURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2025 AS AT 30 JUNE 2024

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Financial Services to update Members with the forecast outturn position for the 2024/25 financial year for the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets and to show performance against the approved estimates of revenue expenditure and income.

The report ensures that the Council has overall financial sustainability for the current financial year compared to the budgeted position.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the General fund projected favourable outturn variance of £0.145m be noted;
- b) the Housing Revenue Account projected unfavourable outturn variance of £0.048m to the Major Repairs Reserve be noted;

- c) the Capital Programme revised budget and financing of £63.232 be noted; and
- d) the Prudential indicators at Appendix A be noted.

106 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2024/25

The Committee considered the report from Philip Lazenby, Director of Audit (TIAA) providing a summary of Internal Audit work undertaken during 2024/25 against the agreed audit plan.

The report provided details of all reports issued within the first part of the financial year 2024/25.

Based on the findings of the Internal Audit report, the committee asked for a further report to be tabled at a future meeting which outlines the Council's action plan to resolve the issues identified.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Members considered and commented upon the latest internal audit progress report and noted its content, and that a report setting out the Council's arrangements for project management be brought to a future meeting.

107 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN

The Committee considered the report from the Director of Customer Services and Organisational Development to inform Members of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman annual review updates.

The report highlighted it was an Ombudsman requirement that Annual Review Letters are shared with Members. The Committee were informed that the Housing Ombudsman had not advised when it will be publishing its next set of annual figures.

AGREED (unanimously) that Members noted the report.

108 GAS SAFETY COMPLIANCE - OVERVIEW AND LESSONS LEARNT

The Committee considered the report from the Director for Housing, Health and Wellbeing which provided an overview of the circumstances of making a self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) for a breach of the Home Standard for failures in the Council's HRA Gas Servicing Programme.

It also set out the actions taken to bring the Council out of regulation, confirmed performance has returned to its previous levels, and actions taken to prevent a further occurrence.

As at 6 September 2024, the current performance of the gas servicing programme was 34 properties without a valid gas certificate. The Committee noted that many of these cases are new and not those outstanding from the last report.

The Committee noted an amendment to Recommendation c) 'Appendix 3' to read as

'Section 3'.

The Committee also recommended an amendment to Recommendation a) deleting the original recommendation and replacing it to propose that a report be prepared for the next meeting that documents the progress being made on gas safety compliance. This was proposed by Councillor Shakeshaft and seconded by Councillor Haynes.

AGREED that:

- a) a report be prepared for the next meeting that documents the progress being made on gas safety compliance;
- b) the actions completed as a result of the service failure be noted; and
- c) the remaining recommendations in the Action Plan in Section 3 to be actioned and noted.

109 REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS REGARDING COUNCILLORS

The Committee considered the report from the Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services, Monitoring Officer to approve updates and revisions to the Council's Arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints regarding Councillors.

The report reminded Members that in April 2024 they had agreed a review of the process for dealing with complaints be undertaken, an informal workshop took place in July 2024 with four Members attending.

The current arrangements for dealing with standards complaints were included in Appendix A for reference, and Appendix B provided the updated Code of Conduct Complaints Process for approval.

The Assistant Director proposed some minor amendments to Appendix B: amending the use of 'may' on pages 96 and 97 of the agenda papers to 'will' and 'will normally', for the avoidance of doubt to add reference to the Deputy Monitoring Officer and delete a superfluous cross-reference at paragraph 8(l).

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the Council's arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints as updated and attached at Appendix B of the report are approved subject to the minor amendments detailed by the Monitoring Officer verbally at the meeting; and
- b) to recommend to Cabinet that the Council's Independent Persons are awarded an inflationary pay increase in line with the Chief Officer pay award rate in 2025-26 and each year until the end of the 4-year term in 2027 at which time a further review should be undertaken.

110 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The Committee considered the joint report of the Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services, Monitoring Officer and the Business Manager for Financial Services which attached the Committee's Work Plan for consideration.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Work Plan be noted.

111 CHANGE OF MEETING DAY OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the report from the Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services, Monitoring Officer to consider moving the day for the Committee from a Wednesday to a Monday going forward, to support Committee Members who find it difficult to attend meetings on Wednesday evenings.

The Members did not feel that they had had enough time to consider whether to move the day of the Committee, and that Members should be consulted outside the meeting.

AGREED that the Audit & Governance Committee to leave the scheduled meeting dates as they are for this municipal year and for members to provide their preferences with which days of the week they are able to attend for the next municipal year.

Meeting closed at 7.59 pm.

Chair