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AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Monday, 25 January 2021

6.00 - 8.01 p.m.

Present:

Councillor K Hodson (Chair)

Councillors S Whittingham AER Jones
J Bird T Cox
K Cannon I Lewis
K Greaney S Kelly
D Burgess-Joyce

In attendance:

Councillor J Green

15 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed Members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee, Officers and members of the public viewing online to the meeting.

16 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they were.

Councillor Stuart Whittingham declared a personal interest in Item 8 by virtue of his employer taking a position during the recent trade union dispute.

17 **MINUTES**

The Chair highlighted that minute item 14 contained several typographical errors.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 16 November 2020 and 11 January 2021, be approved, subject to the following amendments:

Under minute Item 14 paragraph 6, £9.3, be replaced with £9.3m.

Under minute Item 14 paragraph 8, Mark Stokes be replaced with Mark Stocks.

Under minute Item 14 paragraph 8, Covid-10 be replaced with Covid-19.

18 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

The Chair informed the Audit and Risk Management Committee that no petitions, public questions, or requests to make a statement had been received.

19 INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

Mark Niblock, Chief Internal Auditor, introduced his report that summarised the work of the Internal Audit Service for the period 1 November to 31 December 2020. The report identified the significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on scheduled audit work and included an analysis of planned work for the remainder of 2020/21.

It was reported that as a result of the pandemic, many internal audits had been suspended therefore the team had refocused its activity towards supporting the corporate response to Covid-19 in other areas of the Council. Furthermore work was underway to evaluate and test the effectiveness of the control arrangements in operation for the Merseyside Pension Fund and Wirral Growth Company, alongside further work being undertaken on cyber security.

The report further detailed the work planned for the remainder of the year as identified in the revised Internal Audit Plan, based upon the significance of the risks presented as a result of Covid-19.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

20 CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Helen Turner, Risk, Continuity & Compliance Manager, introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the Council's risk management framework and highlighted areas of risk management work in the coming year.

Members were reminded that the Corporate Risk Register was undergoing a review to align to the Wirral Plan 2025 priorities. In addition, the Council had adopted a new Performance Management Framework, with risks to be monitored at the Organisational Performance Board and areas of non-compliance addressed at the Corporate Governance Group.

An update was provided on the Council's information management arrangements following a query at a previous meeting. A detailed report on the work undertaken on information management was due to be submitted to the Audit and Risk Management Committee's next meeting, however members were advised that new and updated corporate e-learning courses

had been made available and key policies were being reviewed to ensure that they covered the changes towards agile working as a result of the pandemic.

Members discussed the varying risk appetites across the Council and how this was factored in, as well as the corporate risk benchmarking exercises that were undertaken.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

21 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

In response to comments from members, the Committee was advised by the legal representative of the reasons for excluding the press and public from the meeting. The report revealed the identity of individuals whose privacy was protected by General Data Protection Regulations, and that it was not necessary for the individuals identity to be disclosed to the public in order for the report to achieve its purpose. It was the view of the legal representative that any discussion held in open session may result in that information being disclosed.

Members were supportive of the reasons for the report being exempt, but the view was expressed that further reassurances to Wirral schools were needed in public and a further action report should be brought back to the next meeting to be heard in public.

Resolved – That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

22 **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT - WOODCHURCH ROAD PRIMARY**

Iain Miles, Audit Manager introduced a report which detailed an internal audit report for Woodchurch Road Primary School.

After a significant debate and the Audit Manager having responded to questions from Members, an additional recommendation was proposed by Councillor Stuart Whittingham and seconded by Councillor David Burgess-Joyce:

“That the Audit and Risk Management Committee requests that this report be considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee. Furthermore that a further report be prepared for consideration in public at the next meeting of the Audit and Risk Management Committee, and that this report also be considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee.”

The motion was approved unanimously.

Resolved – That

- (1) the report be noted.**
- (2) the Audit and Risk Management Committee request that this report be considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee. Furthermore that a further report be prepared in a format suitable for consideration in public at the next meeting of the Audit and Risk Management Committee, and that this report also be considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee.**
- (3) representatives of the Director of Children, Families and Education and the Director of Resources be requested to attend the next meeting of the Audit and Risk Management Committee for the consideration of the additional item on Woodchurch Road Primary School.**