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AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 17 January 2023

Present: Councillor S Mountney (Chair)

Councillors S Kelly S Powell-Wilde
Jason Walsh P Martin
T Cox

35 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair opened the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast and a copy was retained on the Council's website.

36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Angela Davies.

37 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.
There were no declarations of interests.

38 MINUTES

Members noted that for the matter brought up in Minute 25 at the last meeting, the Hoylake town hall development known as the Beacon Project and the value for money of the funds for it, the Director of Resources had written to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to request an update and had not received a reply. The Chair informed Members that he would write on behalf of the Committee.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2022, be approved.

39 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

No questions or statements had been received.

40 INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE REPORT

The Chief Internal Auditor presented his report which identified and evaluated the performance of the Internal Audit Service and included details of any issues arising from the actual work undertaken during the period 1 October to

31 December 2022. The Internal Audit Charter and Strategy were included for endorsement.

Members queried detail in the report to satisfy themselves that sufficient capacity and controls were in place to investigate and reduce errors.

Resolved: That the report be noted and the Internal Audit Charter and Strategy be endorsed.

41 **CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

The Risk, Continuity and Compliance Manager introduced the report of the Director of Finance which provided an update on the Council's risk management arrangements for the Corporate and Directorate Risk Registers including the latest version of the Corporate Risk Registers and the first Policy and Service Committee risk workshops.

Members requested more detail on matters such as hospital pressures and relations with partner organisations to ensure robustness against risks.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

42 **HYBRID WORKING**

The Assistant Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development presented the report of the Director of Resources which set out the Council's approach to the adoption of hybrid working and gave an update on the steps taken to implement this way of working across services. Hybrid working had become standard practice for about 1,800 of the Council's 3,500 staff since the Covid-19 pandemic and was generally welcomed without any reported loss in productivity or any increase in sickness levels. It had not been imposed and principles of working had developed.

Members queried the details of the arrangements including cost benefits and contact methods.

Resolved: That how the Council has adopted hybrid working, the principles and support that are in place to provide a framework to support the effective operation and management of hybrid working be noted.

43 **MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION**

The Senior Finance Manager for Major Projects and Corporate Activity presented the report of the Director of Finance which provided an update on the calculation of the annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), made in relation to the financing of past and current capital expenditure. Audit and

Risk Management Committee requested in July 2022 that a report be brought in regard of MRP to a future meeting of the Committee. This was in response to Grant Thornton's, the Council's external auditors, External Audit Annual Report 2020-21. The terminology was explained as well as the main calculations and potential alternative approaches. It was noted that an MRP policy was approved annually by full Council.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

44 **ANNUAL UPDATE ON USE OF SURVEILLANCE POWERS UNDER THE REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA)**

The Principle Lawyer for Litigation and Governance presented the report of the Director of Law and Governance which provided an annual update on issues relevant to certain types of surveillance activity which the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 enabled local authorities to carry out. In 2022 there were 28 uses of the powers and 6 breaches uncovered.

Resolved: That the use made by the Council of covert surveillance since 1 January 2022 be noted.

45 **PLANNING SYSTEM UPDATE**

The Head of ICT and Digital presented the report of the Director of Resources which updated the Committee on the implementation of the public portal for planning, building control and the regulatory services. The element for Land Charges was still to be released. It was noted that the issues over functionality which had prompted comments had largely been resolved.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

46 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved – That in accordance with section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The public interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

47 **EXEMPT APPENDIX - PLANNING SYSTEM UPDATE**

Resolved: That the exempt appendix be noted.

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