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COUNCIL

Tuesday, 14 January 2025

Councillor C Povall (The Civic Mayor)
B Kenny (The Deputy Civic Mayor)

Councillors	A Ainsworth	M Jordan
	C Baldwin	S Kelly
	P Basnett	J Stewart Laing
	G Bennett	T Laing
	S Bennett	E Lamb
	J Bird	I Lewis
	M Booth	L Luxon-Kewley
	A Brame	P Martin
	H Cameron	C McDonald
	C Carubia	G McManus
	P Cleary	J McManus
	C Cooke	R Molyneux
	G Cooper	K Murphy
	A Davies	T Murphy
	G Davies	R Pitt
	S Foulkes	S Powell-Wilde
	A Gardner	H Raymond
	P Gilchrist	L Rennie
	H Gorman	M Redfern
	N Graham	J Robinson
	JE Green	M Skillicorn
	EA Grey	K Stuart
	J Grier	P Stuart
	B Hall	M Sullivan
	A Hodson	E Tomeny
	K Hodson	J Walsh
	P Jobson	KJ Williams
	G Jenkinson	J Williamson
	J Johnson	V Wilson
	T Jones	G Wood

30 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Civic Mayor welcomed Members to the Extraordinary Council meeting and asked Members to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest.

No such declarations of interest were made.

31 **CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Civic Mayor announced that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Cox, Graham Davies and Onwuemene.

32 **EXTERNAL AUDITORS ANNUAL REPORT 2023/2024 - STATUTORY RECOMMENDATION**

The Council considered a report from the Director of Finance (S151 Officer), stating the Council's external auditors (Grant Thornton) had completed the Council's audit of the 2023-24 Statutory Accounts. As part of the process the auditors undertook a Value for Money audit, which was reported in their Annual Audit Report.

The auditors had a duty to provide an Annual Audit Report of the key issues/findings from their Value for Money review, for consideration by a wider audience across the Council, Pension Fund and its key stakeholders.

The Annual Audit Report included a Statutory Recommendation issued under Section 24 and Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the Council, due to the serious financial challenges the Council was enduring. Management response to the recommendation was included in the report. The full report was to be considered at Audit and Risk Management Committee in January 2025.

The Civic Mayor reminded Members that the purpose of the meeting was to focus on the statutory recommendations and not the wider recommendations as contained within appendix 1 of the report.

The External Auditor was then invited to make a statement in relation to the recommendations.

The Civic Mayor then invited the Chief Executive to provide a management response in relation to the recommendations.

Members then asked questions of the External Auditors and the Director of Finance. A range of questions were considered including how the budget had been monitored, budget pressures, the spending freeze announced in September 2024 and how Members could gain assurance and confidence that actions and processes were being effectively and efficiently carried out. Members questions were duly responded to.

The Civic Mayor then invited Group Leaders to address the Council, followed by the Chair of Audit and Risk Management Committee.

A further debate was held followed with the Leader of the Council exercising his right of reply. Councillor Paul Stuart highlighted the pressures the Council had been under, noting that his aim over the coming weeks was to set a balanced budget that benefits the Community.

Resolved – that,

- 1. notes and accepts the single Statutory Recommendation in the Auditor’s Annual Report 2023/24 be accepted;**
- 2. the single Statutory Recommendation be referred to Policy and Resources Committee as part of the budget setting process; and**
- 3. the management comment responding to the single Statutory Recommendation as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report be noted.**

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