

Audit Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 13 October 2020

Present: Councillor Ahmed Ali – in the Chair

Councillors: Clay, Lanchbury, Russell and Watson

Independent Co-opted member: Dr S Downs

Apologies: Councillor Stanton and Barker

Also present:

Karen Murray, Mazars (External Auditor)

AC/20/26. Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2020 as a correct record.

AC/20/27. Risk Management Strategy and Corporate Risk Register: Audit and Risk

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer / Head of Internal Audit and Risk Management. As part of its role, the Audit Committee is tasked “to obtain assurance over the Council’s corporate governance and risk management arrangements, the control environment and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements”. In supporting this responsibility the Committee receives an annual progress report in relation to delivery of Risk and Resilience strategic priorities. The report provided the Committee with:

- an update on progress in delivery of corporate risk management objectives and the proposed Risk Management Strategy 2020-22; and
- a copy of the latest refresh of the Corporate Risk Register.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee.

A member referred to the Corporate Risk Register (Strategic Risks) and asked officers why the risk relating to targets for affordable housing did not include a risk owner, deadline or key actions. Officers were also asked how they would align with the GMCA affordable housing strategy.

It was reported that affordable housing had been recently added to the register and had been included in view of the importance and scale of affordable housing in Manchester. The risk will include the delivery, monitoring and the Northern Gateway with deadlines and actions the responsibility of the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) and it will be overseen by an officer Housing Board. The GMCA

requirements would be met through the framework which Manchester is working within.

A member referred to homelessness and the scale of economic downturn the city is experiencing and concerns that resources are not available to meet large scale challenge. Reference was also made to disruption to education, nursery provision resulting from the impact of Covid19 and the pressure on working families this could potentially have.

The Committee was informed that this would be taken back and considered against ongoing risk issues. The risk register is concerned with capacity and the ability to cope in the event short term school closures.

A member referred to the wellbeing of staff detailed in the risk register. In acknowledging the good work done to support Council the point was made that seasonal flu vaccination of staff was important to ensure good levels of staff health is maintained.

The City Treasurer reported that the risk relates to a workforce having to deal with service provision and it is important to ensure that staff are supported and working in a safe environment. It was reported that social care staff receive free flu vaccination and there is a co-ordinated approach through care homes.

A member referred to the Corporate Plan and if it would be changed as a result of the Our Manchester reset.

The Committee was informed that the Corporate Plan would be updated in line with the Our Manchester reset in February 2021, in view of the challenges the Council is currently under.

Officers were asked for an assurance that EU exit planning is still taking place to ensure there is no impact on the supply of goods and services. It was reported that work was restarting the work and the formal group had been restarted with regular updates to the Senior Management Team.

A member referred a potential threat to data governance through homeworking and asked officers if work had been done to assess this. It was reported that work had been done to assess work at home and the transfer to new systems. Corporate Assurance Information Risk Group is looking in this area and will refresh guidance for staff working from home.

Decision

The Committee noted the report and comments made.

AC/20/28. External Auditor - Update report

The Committee considered the report of the of the Council's external auditor (Mazar's) updating the Committee on audit work ongoing. The Committee was advised that there were no issues of concern to report at this time. Reference was

also made to the National Publications and the information provided for the Committee.

The Committee was invited to comment on the report.

A member referred to the language used in the report and requested that word 'citizens' and not 'customers' be used within future reports to describe residents of Manchester.

Reference was made to the Redmond Review and the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer advised the Committee that a briefing paper would be circulated to members of the Committee on the findings and the responses to it. In addition members of the Committee would receive updates and explanation on the Redmond report as part of the training session taking place in December.

Decision

The Committee noted the report

AC/20/29. Exclusion of Public

Decision

To exclude the public during consideration of the following item which involved consideration of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of particular persons, and public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

AC/20/30. Audit Quality Review - Inspection Report

The Committee received a report from the Council's external auditors.

Decision

To note the report.