

Audit Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2022

Present:

Councillor Ahmed Ali - In the Chair
Councillors Clay, Hitchen, Lanchbury, Robinson and Russell
Independent Co-opted member: Dr D Barker
Independent Co-opted member: Dr S Downs

Also Present:

Alistair Newall, Mazars (External Auditor)
Karen Murray, Mazars (External Auditor)

AC/22/01 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2021 as a correct record.

AC/22/02 Internal Audit Assurance Report Q3

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Audit and Risk Management which provided an update of progress on the agreed audit plan 2021/22; additional work assigned to the audit service and copies of the audit opinions issued in the period November 2021 to January 2022.

The report included information on:

- The Audit Programme of Delivery
- Resource and Planning Objectives
- Children's Services and Education audit activity including, School Financial Health Checks, Foster Care payments
- Adults Services audit activity including, Client Financial Services (Appointeeships), Direct Payments, Technology Enabled Care, Better Outcomes Better Lives, Adults Management Oversight and Supervisions,
- Corporate Core audit activity including, Information Governance, Information and ICT, Core Systems
- Neighbourhoods; Growth and Strategic Development audit activity including Housing Operations – Governance Arrangements, Approach to Empty Homes and Voids, Victoria North (formerly Northern Gateway), Traffic Signals Maintenance Grant
- Audit activity relating to Procurement, Contracts and Commissioning (PCC) practices including Factory Project Assurance, a follow up review – Children's Placements, Carbon Reduction in Procurement, Contract Management – Adult Social Care, Waivers and Contract Extensions
- Audit Activity relating to Counter-Fraud and Investigations including Proactive activity and Reactive Corporate Cases; and

- Other Investigations including Business Grants, Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Housing Tenancies
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Appended to the report were:

- The delivery status of the annual audit plan 2021/22
- Executive summaries November 2021 to January 2022; and
- The basis of Audit Assessments (Opinion/Priority/Impact)

The key lines of enquiry discussed in the meeting were in relation to:

- School Financial Health Checks, in respect of all final reports resulting in a limited assurance opinion
- The approach to Empty Homes and Voids,
- Adults Services: Client Financial Services (Appointeeships),
- Procurement, Contracts and Commissioning - Waivers and Contract Extensions

Members welcomed the proposals outlined in relation to Empty Homes and Voids noting that progress on addressing the matter had likely been impacted on by the global pandemic. The Head of Audit and Risk Management gave clarification that Internal Audit's remit would be on the systems and processes in place to deliver an effective voids management system. The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer suggested that it would be helpful for members to receive a report to be scheduled for the new municipal year which outlines actions and progress in terms of the assimilation of Northwards into the Council's Housing Operations Service.

With regard to Adult Social Care Waiver and Contract Extensions, The Head of Audit and Risk Management reported no concerns over compliance but indicated that coordinated work through the Commercial Board was needed to simplify constitutional wording in respect of contract authorisations as it had been deemed too constraining.

Members were informed that it was anticipated that the audit of contract management arrangements (Adults Services) would be complete with a final report issued by early May 2022. Should that timescale be delayed, the Director would be asked to provide an explanation to the Committee at its request.

In light of the proposal to defer planned audit activity of Adult Services Directorate Direct Payments (Client Financial Services) until 2022/23 due to arrangements being in place for that work to be delivered by the relevant professional bodies, Members sought to explore the extent to which audit work was coordinated across Greater Manchester (GM) boroughs to prevent unnecessary duplication. The Head of Audit and Risk Management described a well-established and positive relationship with colleagues in the GMCA citing good examples of coordinated work, though it was recognised that greater coordination may be possible in light of the presence of integrated care systems.

In respect of the assurance opinions relating to School Financial Health Checks, the Committee sought to explore the underlying reasons in light of all of the schools

named in the report having been ranked as 'limited'. Members highlighted this as a concern. The Head of Audit and Risk Management gave assurance that this did not reflect the position across all schools and was confined to a targeted sample of schools where it was understood that focussed audit work was indicated. These were smaller establishments where segregation of duties was more likely to be impacted upon by changed processes and priorities resulting from the global pandemic. He also indicated that this was, in part, a reflection of the criteria for selection of schools for inclusion in audit activity. The Committee discussed the benefits of reciprocal arrangements between smaller schools where challenges around duty segregation were evident as well as the importance of contingency measures which could be achieved through cluster arrangements and / or traded business support functions for instances related to significant staff absence. The Head of Audit and Risk Management agreed to reiterate the benefits of reciprocal arrangements as a possible way forward for schools facing challenges of this type. The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer made reference to the monitoring role of the Local Authority's wider finance teams in terms of oversight and management of financial risk for maintained schools, which sit in parallel to the work of the internal audit function. A report which outlines the broad scope of the Local Authority's relationship with schools would be scheduled in the new municipal year to describe those relationships in a bid to address those concerns.

Discussions moved to Appointeeships for Client Financial Services – a member noted that two key actions that had been previously identified had not yet been implemented. The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer informed the Committee that the Service Manager had met with herself and the Head of Audit and Risk Management to discuss the audit findings and there was confidence that the right arrangements were in place. A substantive response to outstanding actions were anticipated for early April 2022, adding that the service had recently been audited by the Office of the Public Guardian, the findings of which had been positive in respect of their audit of records management and the associated processes that were in place.

With regard to delivery of the Audit Programme, Members sought assurance that there was sufficient capacity within the team to catch up on planned activity that had not yet started. The Head of Audit and Risk Management gave assurance that the finalisation of the redesign remained on track in terms of planned implementation timescales. The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer suggested that the next assurance report would include specific reference to the impact of Business Rates /government grants work and the COVID relief fund in respect of impact on audit programming. The Chair requested that the redesign of Human Resources and Organisational Development should also be included for discussion.

Decision

1. To note the report.
2. To schedule a report which describes the Local Authority's education and finance colleagues' relationship with the maintained schools' sector, in terms of management of compliance, oversight and measures of internal control in the new municipal year.

3. To request that the next scheduled assurance report includes information about Business Rates /government grants assurance work, including the COVID relief fund legacy and the HROD redesign

AC/22/03 Outstanding Audit Recommendations Q3

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Audit and Risk Management which summarised the current implementation position and arrangements for monitoring and reporting internal and external audit recommendations, in line with PSAA requirements.

The report provided information on:

- The standard process for follow up on management actions on high-risk recommendations
- The current implementation position, including outstanding audit recommendations (over 12 months), Significant / Critical Overdue Recommendations (less than 6 months), as well as those not yet overdue.

An overview of all outstanding recommendations was appended to the report.

Key lines of enquiry of enquiry discussed in the meeting were in relation to outstanding recommendations in respect of:

- Mental Health Casework - the development of processes for reconciling safeguarding referrals and the outcomes of these between the Council and the Trust
- Transitions of social care from Children's to Adults Services
- Section 106 agreements

In introducing the report, the Head of Audit and Risk Management referred to a discussion at the Committee's November 2021 meeting about the implementation of recommendations about the frequency of Planning for Permanence meetings. The Deputy Director of Children's Services attended the meeting and explained that the policy around planning for permanence had since been revised to bring about a greater focus on the individual circumstances of the child / young person. These meetings were now scheduled to take place before a child's second review meeting and was felt to imbue more meaning and purpose to that measure. In terms of the frequency of those meetings, a quantitative measure was delivered through a monthly dashboard that is routinely considered by the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP). A member agreed that the matter had been well debated and carefully considered by the CPP with the issue of finding appropriate placements remaining high on its agenda.

With regard to Mental Health Casework, a member expressed concern that the recommendation had not been implemented, mindful of the length of time that had elapsed. Whilst it was acknowledged that the impact of the global pandemic had more than likely adversely impacted progress, the implication on safeguarding of a vulnerable cohort was highlighted as a concern and that appropriate rigor and scrutiny should therefore be applied. It was also noted that no revised completion

date for this action had been submitted. Members noted that reference to the delay had been attributed to challenges around staff training during the pandemic and the interface between the Council's Liquid Logic and the Trust's own platform. Whilst it was acknowledged that there had been some change to strategy, the detailed reasons for the delay and barriers to implementation remained unclear. The Committee resolved to request that the Director of Adults Services provides a formal update on this specific issue for the next meeting of the Committee. It was also suggested that the response should encompass all of the outstanding recommendations made in connection with Adult Services in light of safeguarding considerations. The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer agreed that a formal response from the Director was necessary but gave assurance that in the absence of the outstanding recommendations being implemented, other measures were in place to ensure that cases were appropriately reviewed during the significant additional challenge faced by Adult Social Care colleagues throughout the pandemic .

Decision

1. To note the report
2. To schedule a report for the next meeting of the committee which provides in depth detail on the barriers to implementation of recommendations yet to be implemented for Directorate for Adults.

AC/22/04 External Audit Progress

The Committee considered the report of the External Auditors (Mazars) which set out progress towards completion of the annual external audit and provided a summary of reports and publications which may be of interest to the Committee in its wider governance role.

Karen Murray (Partner, Mazars) introduced the report stating, with regard to the completion of the 2019/20 Whole of Government Accounts (WGA), that updated submissions were received from the Council in December 2021, resulting in completion of the audit within the final deadline. As previously reported, the delays were described as being due to technical difficulties with the interface with the HM Treasury online portal and subsequent output to evidence the trail of audited financial statements. Delays were also due in part to the unresolved audit queries as a result of staff absences which had led to additional audit work resulting in additional fees in line with Public Sector Audit Appointment (PSAA) arrangements.

Work concerning financial statements, audit queries and evidence requests for 2020/21 was still being progressed across a number of account areas, although the number of outstanding areas had significantly reduced. It was reiterated that the most significant and complex area requiring completion was in relation to sample testing of the valuation of Council land, buildings and investment properties, involving input from several external valuers across a diverse asset base. The intention was for Mazars to complete their audit work in time for the Committee's March meeting however the challenges and complexities associated with this particular area of activity presented a risk that that timetable may be unachievable.

In respect of audit work in connection with Value for Money arrangements, changes to the NAO Code of Audit Practice had changed the nature of external audit work for arrangements for 2020/21. This work would be concluded in conjunction with the completion of the activity around financial statements.

With regard to Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) work for 2020/21, the Committee was invited to note that instructions and timetable had not yet been issued resulting in the Council being unable to progress its 2020/21 submission. It was explained that this was because HM Treasury was in the process in seeking to resolve challenges with the system that they use. In addition, Mazars's audit instructions and timetable are issued by the National Audit Office. Those instructions had also not yet been issued and as a result, those delays to the timetable would place additional pressures on the Council and Mazars.

Moving to discussion about the national publications, Ms Murray drew the Committee's attention to a consultation announced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) on time limited changes to the Code with effect from the end of March 2022. The aim being to help alleviate delays to the publication of audited financial statements in light of only 9% of Local Authority accounts in England having met the audit publication deadline of 30 September 2021. Ms Murray indicated that the consultation should be considered in conjunction with newly announced measures to improve the timeliness of local audit and accounts as well as confirmation of the audit timetable by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). These include additional funds and an extension of the deadline for publishing accounts.

There was a discussion about the impact of the delays on the 2021/22 external audit. The Committee was informed that some aspects of the audit were possible, though the progression of detailed audit work would be delayed. The associated changes to the audit timetable would need to be worked through in consultation with the Council's finance teams to agree an achievable timetable.

With regard to the anticipated completion date of March 2022, Ms Murray described the challenges and complexities at large in the audit for valuation of land, buildings and properties. The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer explained that in recent years there had been a change in emphasis on the importance of valuations, with local government gradually moving towards an audit regime similar to that found within the private sector. For the private sector the treatment of assets on the balance sheet was material, in that collateral may be raised against it. However, in local government bodies, the position differed with regard to public sector assets (eg schools) and this presented a challenge in terms of financial value in local audits, with an associated pressure to provide the same quality of regularly updated valuations across all of the public estate. Turning to the CIPFA consultation referred to by Ms Murray, the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer explained that the aim of the consultation sought to establish whether valuations for some public sector assets could be simplified. However, on the assumption that this was not possible a significant investment in work to underpin valuation records of the Council's complex and diverse public sector estate was likely. With regard to the Council's response to the CIPFA consultation, the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer informed the Committee that this would be done in collaboration with Core Cities colleagues in

respect of the valuations, however irrespective of the outcome of the consultation it was felt that a material change to the 2021/22 audit was unlikely due to tight timescales.

Decision

To note the report.

AC/22/05 Work Programme and Recommendations Monitor

The Committee considered a report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which provided a summary of recent recommendations made by the Committee and the its draft Work Programme.

Decision

To note the report.

AC/22/06 Exclusion of the Public

A recommendation was made that the public be excluded during consideration of the following items of business.

Decision

To exclude the public during consideration of the following items 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/22/07 2018/19 Audit and Accounts [Public Excluded]

The Committee received an oral statement from the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer on the 2018/19 Audit and Accounts.

Decision

To note the statement.

(Councillor Robinson declared a personal interest as a tenant of Solutions for Brunswick (S4B))

Licensing Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 7 March 2022

Present: Councillor Ludford – in the Chair

Councillors: Grimshaw, Hewitson, Connolly, Hassan, Jeavons and Riasat

Apologies: Councillor Hughes, Andrews, Evans, Flanagan, and Reid.

LHP/22/1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2021 were submitted for approval.

Decision

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 25 October 2021.

LHP/22/2 Licensing Update

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing that provided a topical update on various Licensing matters.

The Principal Licensing Officer introduced the report, first discussing COVID-19 and the changes this had made for Licensed Premises. Whilst Government restrictions have changed, the Principal Licensing Officer stated that venues have still been asked to exercise caution.

A proposed relaxation in licensing hours for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend was then discussed. This would extend Licensing hours until 01.00am but has not yet received approval from Government.

The Principal Licensing Officer then discussed changes to TEN's and the provisions of the Business and Planning Act 2020. They discussed the extensions to some of the temporary provisions contained within them.

The Principal Licensing Officer then moved on to discuss the Action Counters Terrorism (ACT) training, providing Committee with an update on the progress of this. In-person sessions of the training have begun, with feedback positive about the course.

The Principal Licensing Officer then informed the Committee that a review of the Licensing Policy was underway, with the intention that a consultation will begin shortly. The review aims to decrease the size of the policy, to make it more accessible. The review also aims to ensure that the policy is fit for purpose. The Principal Licensing Officer invited members of the Committee to meet outside of the meeting if they had any ideas on what they wanted to see in the review.

Finally, the Principal Licensing Officer provided an update on Gambling Harms. GMCA had been awarded a sum of money to fund a programme across Greater Manchester, with the aim of preventing and reducing gambling related harm.

The Committee expressed that it was good to hear the update on Gambling Harms. A member of the Committee discussed the experiences of a constituent who had a gambling problem.

A member of the Committee then questioned the impact of relaxing licensing hours for the Platinum Jubilee celebrations and how ACT training can be tailored to individual licensed premises. The Principal Licensing Officer stated that no concerns had been raised to themselves regarding the relaxation in hours causing any additional problems. In terms of ACT training, the content of the course has evolved slightly. It is noted as difficult to relate the training directly to individual Licensed Premises as it is a nationally recognised course. The Principal Licensing Officer stated that those delivering the training have the ability to focus on the key areas of the content for those they deliver to.

The Committee then questioned more on the Gambling Harms update, also asking for further updates on case studies in the area. The Principal Licensing Officer offered to bring case studies and detailed figures before a future committee. They informed the Committee that the Government's White Paper has been delayed but a key facet of the review is social responsibility of gambling operators and this is expected to be addressed in the Paper. An update will be brought to a future Committee.

Decision

The Committee noted the report.

Planning and Highways Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 17 February 2022

Present: Councillor Curley (Chair)

Councillors: Andrews, Y Dar, Davies, Flanagan, Kamal, J Lovecy, Lyons, Riasat, Richards and Stogia

Apologies: Councillors Shaukat Ali, Baker-Smith and Kirkpatrick

Also present:
Councillor Hitchens

PH/22/07 Supplementary Information on Applications Being Considered

A copy of the late representations received had been circulated in advance of the meeting regarding applications 132429/FO/2021 and 131895/JO/2021.

Decision

To receive and note the late representations.

PH/22/08 Minutes

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2022 as a correct record.

PH/22/09 129318/FO/2021 - Development Adjacent The Jolly Butcher Public House, Petersfield Drive, Manchester, M23 9PS - Brooklands Ward

The applicant was proposing to erect a two storey dwellinghouse on a cul-de-sac off Petersfield Drive. The site is adopted highway and currently allows access to a number of properties on Petersfield Drive and Virginia Close.

This application related to a site, 350m² in size, located on the southern side of Petersfield Drive. The site consists of a small cul-de-sac and associated pavements which provides pedestrian and vehicular access to the rear of nos. 64 and 66 Petersfield Drive, as well as pedestrian access to nos. 14 to 18 Virginia Close and the adjoining pub, The Jolly Butcher. The site is an adopted highway. To the north of the site, on the opposite side of Petersfield Drive, there is a single storey commercial terrace, while to the east there is a terrace of three 2 storey dwellinghouses, nos. 62 to 66 Petersfield Drive. To the east of the site stands The Jolly Butcher PH and to the south lies the rear gardens of nos. 14 to 18 Virginia Close.

The applicant was proposing to erect a two storey detached dwellinghouse on the cul de-sac with gardens to the front and rear, with the rear garden being separated

from the dwelling by a two metre wide strip in order to provide two parking spaces and to allow vehicular access to no. 64 and 66 Petersfield Road.

Objections had been received from five households and the adjoining public house. Objections had been raised in respect of the impact on residential amenity, pedestrian and highway safety and the operation of The Jolly Butcher PH.

The Planning Officer informed the Committee that there had been an appeal against non-determination in relation to this application and stated that reasons for the Officer's recommendation of Minded to Refuse were included within the report.

No objector to the application attended the meeting or addressed the Committee on the application.

No Applicant attended the meeting or addressed the Committee on the application.

The Chair invited the Committee to make comments or ask questions.

Councillor Andrews moved the recommendation of Minded to Refuse for the application. Councillor Stogia seconded the proposal.

Decision

The Committee agreed the recommendation of Minded to Refuse for the reasons outlined within the report.

(Councillors Davies and Kamal were not present for this item and took no part in the discussion or decision making process).

PH/22/10 132429/FO/2021 - Two Parcels Of Land Known As "Trinity Islands" Bounded By The River Irwell, Regent Road, Water Street, Trinity Way And The Railway Manchester M3 4JW - Deansgate Ward

This application was proposing the erection of four towers ranging from 39, 48, 55 and 60 storeys to form a mixed use development comprising 1950 residential apartments (Use Class C3a) and commercial uses (Use Classes E and Sui Generis: Drinking Establishment) (361 sqm) within the podium level together with public realm, car and cycle parking, access arrangements and highway works, and other associated works.

This 1.78 hectare site, currently bounded by the River Irwell, Liverpool Road, Water Street and Regent Road, comprises large areas of hard standing which have been used for parking and recently as a construction compound for the Orsdall Chord. Trinity Way divides the site into two parcels of land know as site C and site D and are connected via an underpass.

There had been eight objections, two neutral comments and one in support.

The Planning officer had no further information or additional comments to make.

No objectors to the application attended the meeting or addressed the Committee on the application.

The applicant's agent addressed the Committee on the application.

The Chair invited the Committee to make comments or ask questions.

A member stated that they noted that this application was a flagship regeneration project but felt there was a judgement call between the amount invested in public realm and the social infrastructure contribution whilst being disappointed in the lack of affordable housing for a scheme of such size and questioned how a reasonable balance can be struck with this type of scheme.

The Planning Officer stated that there were serious challenges for the developer on this site with it being dominated by transport links and within the vicinity of an industrial area. The Planning Officer expressed that this development would have to be desirable in order to work due to these factors or risk failure, adding that lowering the specifications would devalue the scheme. The Planning Officer felt that this site would be an asset to the city with a large amount handed over for public space. £1.5million had been secured to contribute to the creation of a new school and create large job increases. The Planning Officer concluded by stating that further input for affordable housing may be possible due to the 9 year period of development and the potential for costs and values to alter during this timespan.

A member questioned whether the £1.5million towards the school fund was coming from this development alone and also asked if the public space was large enough.

The Planning Officer stated that the creation of the school shell was funded by another development and that the fit out for the school would be covered by the contribution from this application. The Planning Officer confirmed that the public realm was of considerable size, at 40% the size of the Mayfield site.

A member asked about the disposal of food waste.

The Planning Officer confirmed that tenants would be responsible for taking food waste to the ground level.

A member stated that they were disappointed in the lack of affordable housing on site, adding that the school project was also not planned to be on site.

The Planning Officer confirmed that the school would be located at Crown Street.

A member wished to express that there was no bar on affordable housing at any site across the city, including the city centre.

The Chair confirmed this policy.

Councillor Flanagan welcomed this investment and felt that the public space would be a benefit to the city and moved the officer's recommendation of Minded to Approve for the application. Councillor Richards seconded the proposal.

Decision

The Committee agreed the recommendation of Minded to Approve subject to the conditions and the signing of a s106 agreement as detailed in the report.

(Councillor Kamal was not present for this item and took no part in the discussion or decision making process).

PH/22/11 131895/JO/2021 - Coleshill Street Manchester M40 8HH – Miles Platting and Newton Heath Ward

This application was placed before the Committee on 18 January 2022, but committee members agreed to defer determination of the application until the next meeting to allow members to be satisfied that the delivery of affordable dwellings at the site forms part of the development agreement.

Permission was sought to remove condition no.44 attached to planning permission reference 125596/FO/2019 (approved subject to conditions and a section 106 agreement on 10 November 2020), in relation to affordable housing.

The approved scheme for 410 new homes, was accompanied by an Affordable Housing Statement, which outlined that the viability of the scheme had been considered in line with best practice and as such a Viability Assessment was submitted for consideration. There are complex ground conditions on the site, which impact on viability, and it was demonstrated that, in itself, the development could not support affordable housing. Through the involvement of a Registered Provider, however, 114 affordable dwellings are to be provided on the site through grant funding from Homes England.

Since the granting of the planning permission, Homes England has confirmed that the houses would not qualify for funding if they are subject to a planning condition. In this instance the affordable homes would be delivered and secured via the Development Agreement with the City Council and provisions in the leases (fulfilled by virtue of the City Council's landownership interest), rather than by way of condition no.44.

Information was now included within the report to address the concerns of members.

The Planning Officer confirmed that this application had been deferred to allow the Committee to be satisfied that the delivery of affordable housing is controlled via the development agreement. The latest report included a response from the head of development, confirming that the delivery of affordable housing is covered by the development agreement and the late representation detailed that the number and percentage of affordable housing is the same as would have been provided under the original application.

A Local Ward Councillor confirmed that all 3 Ward Councillors were now satisfied with this application.

Councillor Andrews thanked the Planning Officers for fulfilling their obligation in bringing the necessary information back to the Committee and moved the recommendation of Minded to Approve for the application. Councillor Stogia seconded the proposal.

(Councillors Flanagan and Richards both declared an interest in this item and left the room during the consideration of the application).

Decision

The Committee agreed the recommendation of Minded to Approve subject to the conditions and the signing of a s106 agreement as detailed in the report.

Standards Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2022

Present

Independent Co-opted Member: N Jackson – In the Chair
Councillors Andrews, Connolly, Evans, Lanchbury and Simcock
Ringway Parish Council: Councillor O'Donovan

Apologies:

Independent Co-opted Member: G Linnell, Councillor Good

ST/22/01 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held 4 November 2021 were submitted for approval.

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2021 as a correct record.

ST/22/02 Standards Committee - Annual Report

The Committee considered the report of the City Solicitor that provided an update on the matters within the remit of the Committee since the beginning of February 2021.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and description of the Roles of the Standards Committee and the Council's Monitoring Officer;
- Update on matters within the remit of the Standards Committee since its last Annual Report;
- Update on matters considered by the Committee; and
- Complaints against Councillors, including a summary of the findings.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were: -

- That Councillors who had yet to update their Register of Interests may wish to consider this. It was noted that a reminder to members on this was scheduled for just after the May elections

Decisions

To note the report and forward this report to full Council for assurance on standards issues.

ST/22/03 Member Development and Training

The Committee considered the report of the City Solicitor that provided an update on the operation and efficacy of the Member Development Strategy and training delivered since February 2021. The report sought the Standards Committee's comments on and approval of the Member Development Strategy 2022-24.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- An overview of the Member Development Strategy and its key objectives;
- A description of the delivery of the New Member Induction programme 2021;
- Induction feedback from May 2021;
- Proposals for New Member Induction 2022;
- Member training February 2021 – January 2022;
- Attendance information;
- Findings from the evaluation of training;
- Scheduled training for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year;
- Training Programme May 2022- April 2023; and
- Training for co-opted members.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were: -

- An invitation to the full Induction programme should be offered to new members (it was confirmed that the two members elected at by elections had attended induction sessions)
- GDPR and Cyber Security training was in place for members and it was requested that all members should access this training
- The "Listening In Action" process was currently under review as it was felt this process worked better as a face-to-face meeting which COVID regulations had not allowed for previously
- The recent Peer Review had highlighted the strength of Scrutiny at the Council and member training had played a part in this.
- ICT services were working hard with assisting in the use of technology but there were improvements to be made (it was noted that ICT services had taken on board the varying levels of IT understanding across staff and members)
- That an update would be fed back on the subject of DBS checks for members
- That mandatory training days should be inputted into members' diaries well in advance (ideally at the start of the municipal year to ensure maximum attendance)
- That some training/knowledge around using the Casework software could be offered via training and/or shared between members
- That ongoing support for using IT equipment was to be reviewed
- That members should be consulted on their IT needs to feed back to the ICT service
- That there were some useful comments to take away regarding approach for ICT issues

Decisions

1. To approve the Member Development Strategy 2022-24.
2. To note the report on training delivered since February 2021.

ST/22/04 Social Media Guidance for Members update

The Committee considered the report of the City Solicitor that provided an update on the operation and efficacy of the Social Media Guidance for Members ('the Guidance') as well as the provision of training for members on the Guidance.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background
- Information relating to the Operation of the Guidance; and
- Member training.
- Minor revisions proposed to the Guidance

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were: -

- That it was good to see that none of the complaints on members' conduct were in relation to the use of social media

Decision

To note the report, approve the minor revisions and request that the Social Media Guidance for Members (as revised) be circulated to all Members .

ST/21/05 Work Programme for the Standards Committee

The Committee considered the report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit that invited the members of the Standards Committee to consider its work programme for future meetings and make any revisions.

Decision

To note the report and agree the Work Programme.

Personnel Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 16 February 2022

Present: Councillor Rahman (Chair) – in the Chair

Councillors: Bridges, Midgley and White

Apologies: Councillors Akbar, Craig and Rawlins

PE/22/1 **Minutes**

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2021 as a correct record.

PE/22/2 **Creation of a new post - Director of Neighbourhood Delivery and the redesignation of the existing post of Director of Policy, Performance and Reform to Assistant Chief Executive**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, which set out the proposal for the creation of a new Director of Neighbourhoods Delivery post within the Neighbourhoods Directorate and the redesignation of the Director of Policy, Performance and Reform to Assistant Chief Executive.

The current Neighbourhoods Directorate played a key role in supporting the delivery of the Our Manchester Strategy. This included the creation of sustainable, safe, resilient, and cohesive neighbourhoods, with good quality green spaces, and accessible culture and sporting facilities. The recent addition of Housing and Homelessness had made the directorate the largest within the organisation with over 1800 staff and with the broadest span of activity.

It was therefore proposed that the number of direct reports into the Strategic Director Neighbourhoods was reviewed and streamlined by creating a new post Director of Neighbourhoods Delivery at senior salary grade SS4 (£98,592 to £108,853). This would bring Neighbourhood teams, Libraries, Galleries and Culture, and Parks, Leisure, Youth and Events, together with Compliance and Community Safety into a single division and would reduce current direct reports from seven to four for the Strategic Director.

It was also proposed that the existing post of Director of Policy, Performance and Reform was redesignated to Assistant Chief Executive on its existing senior salary grade (SS4) to reflect the support, policy work and insight this function provided to the Chief Executive and based on the observations of the recent Peer Review, which in summary asked the Council to consider strengthening the policy and performance capability directly available to the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team.

Decisions

The Committee:-

- (1) Recommends to Council the creation of new post, Director of Neighbourhood Delivery at senior salary grade SS4 Grade (£98,592 to £108,853).
- (2) Note the redesignation of the existing post Director of Policy, Performance and Reform to Assistant Chief Executive on existing senior salary grade SS4 Grade (£98,592 to £108,853) and the change in line management arrangements for this post.

PE/22/3 New and revised HROD policies (Annual Leave, Domestic Abuse and Special Leave)

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, which outlined new and revised employment policies for the Committee's consideration: the new Annual Leave Policy and the revised Domestic Abuse and Special Leave Policies.

The new Annual Leave Policy and revised Domestic Abuse and Special Leave Policies had been developed to fill a policy gap where there was no MCC policy on Annual Leave, updated in line with legislation (revised Domestic Abuse Policy) and new contractual entitlements introduced for Safe Leave and Fostering Leave (revised Special Leave Policy). Feedback from the 2019 Race Equality Review has also been incorporated in the revised Special Leave Policy.

Introducing a new Annual Leave policy would result in more consistent and equitable practice across Directorates in agreeing annual leave requests and authorising annual leave carryover. This also linked to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy by encouraging employees to take regular breaks from work and to use their entitlement to annual leave within the annual leave year.

The revised Domestic Abuse Policy now highlighted the new Third Party Abuse and Harassment Policy and the Abuse and Harassment Report Form for reporting incidents of harassment and unwanted contact at work. It also introduced a contractual right to ten days' paid safe leave in a 12 month period for those fleeing abusive relationships.

The Special Leave Policy had been reviewed and updated to widen the definitions of family to take account of different family and cultural obligations. The Policy also now noted that some protected groups may need more special leave if travelling outside the UK when bereaved. In addition, the circumstances where foster carers may request paid special leave of up to ten days in a 12 month period had been defined. This was to support the Council becoming one of the Fostering Network's Foster Friendly Employers

Comments on these proposed changes had been received from the Trade Unions and noted by the Committee

Decision

The Committee approve the new and revised policies