

AUDIT & CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Audit & Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Thursday, 26th May 2022 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Tom Munro in the Chair

Councillors Tom Kirkham, Graham Parkin and R. Jaffray.

Officers:- Jim Fieldsend (Monitoring Officer), Theresa Fletcher (Treasurer) (left during Minute No. ACO10-22/23), Claire Bamford (Principal Accountant) (joined during Minute No. ACO10-22/23), Kath Drury (Information, Engagement and Performance Manager), Joanne Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer) and Tom Scott (Governance Officer).

Also in attendance at the meeting were Councillors Clive Moesby (Portfolio Holder – Finance), Jen Wilson (Chair of Local Growth Scrutiny Committee) and Mark Surridge (Mazars Director - Audit & Assurance) (joined during Minute No. ACO9-22/23).

ACO1-21/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Rose Bowler, Jane Bryson, David Downes, Anne Clarke, Nick Clarke and Rita Turner.

ACO2-21/22 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to be considered at the meeting.

ACO3-21/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

ACO4-21/22 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Graham Parkin and seconded by Councillor Tom Kirkham **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of an Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee held on 26th April 2022 be approved as a correct record.

ACO5-21/22 LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

Committee considered the List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private document.

RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private

AUDIT & CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

document be noted.

ACO6-21/22 AUDIT & CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

Committee considered their work programme for 2022/23.

Moved by Councillor Tom Munro and seconded by Councillor Graham Parkin.
RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2022/23 be noted.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

ACO7-21/22 CHANGE TO ORDER OF BUSINESS ON THE AGENDA

With the consent of the other Committee Members, the Chair amended the order of the agenda items to move Item 7 'Report of External Audit (Mazars)' to the end of the agenda.

ACO8-21/22 MEMBER TRAINING 2022/23 - MEMBER DISCUSSION

The Scrutiny and Elections Officer referred to the guidance document on knowledge and skills for Audit Committee Members, which had been on the agenda for the Committee meeting on 26th April 2022 (Appendix 2 to the Self-Assessment Action Plan). She explained how she had changed Appendix C of the document into a checklist, and would circulate the checklist to Audit Members for them to complete by 9th June.

The Scrutiny and Elections Officer informed Members that CIPFA were running Audit training in June and September 2022 and the LGA also had a Councillor Workbook which Members could complete.

Councillor Tom Kirkham believed it would be beneficial for current Audit Members to undergo Audit refresher training in order to better support the 2023 intake of elected Members.

ACO9-21/22 CORPORATE AMBITIONS PERFORMANCE UPDATE - JANUARY TO MARCH 2022 (Q4 - 2022/23)

Committee considered a report informing them of the Quarter 4 outturns for the Council's Ambition targets 2020-2024. Out of the 31 targets:

- 18 (58%) were on track
- 1 (3%) continued to be affected by Covid 19
- 1 (3%) achieved in 2021/22
- 1 (3%) failed in 2021/22
- 3 (10%) had been placed on alert
- 7 (23%) achieved previously.

AUDIT & CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager informed Members about the following Ambition Targets:

CUS.10 – the target of “Deliver a health intervention programme which provides 500 adults per year with a personal exercise plan” had been achieved.

CUS.07 – the target of “Reduce average relet times for standard voids (council properties) to 20 calendar days by March 2021 and maintain thereafter” had been placed on alert as it was unlikely to meet its intended outturn in 2021/22.

ENV.08 – the target of “Bring 5 empty properties back into use per year through assistance and enforcement measures” failed to meet its annual outturn. The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager explained that the target had been missed because it took a long time to bring properties back into use.

ENV.03 – the target of “Achieve a combined recycling and composting rate of 50% by March 2023” had been placed on alert as it was unlikely to meet its intended outturn in 2021/22.

ENV.06 – the target of “Increase the number of fixed penalty notices issued for litter and dog fouling offences by 20% over 5 years (2023/24)” had been placed on alert as it was unlikely to meet its intended outturn in 2021/22. The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager explained that the target had been impacted by staffing issues and the inability to carry out face-to-face enforcement controls.

The Scrutiny and Elections Officer explained how questions from Members had been raised on these missed targets in the pre-meet, and she circulated written responses to the questions gathered by the Information, Engagement and Performance Manager as follows:

CUS.07 (standard voids) - Question: Is a temporary revised target needed for 2022/23?
Response: We have discussed amending the target and are looking at alternatives. Once this piece of work is finalised, it will be presented to Members for consideration. (Assistant Director of Property Services & Housing Repairs)

The Chair noted the response and felt it was vital to ensure we had no unrealistic/unreasonable targets, particularly where we were currently affected by external issues, in this case supply of materials for works.

ENV.03 (recycling) - Question: Why is the estimate based on actuals from 2019/20 instead of 2020/21?

Response: The reason for using the 2019/20 data is because the 2020/21 data was substantially affected by COVID and the Wards recycling issue; hence, using the 2019/20 data which was more stable and reflecting service performance in 2021/22. An estimate is used because of the time lag in receiving the confirmed % from the Waste Data Flow system. Q4 actual will be known in July 2022 and then included on the performance report at Q1 2022/23. (Assistant Director of Streetscene)

ENV.06 (fixed penalties) - Question/Enquiry: Details were sought regarding the baseline from which the target is set.

Response: The baseline was the outturn for 19/20 – 56 FPN issued. Therefore the target by 2023/24 is 67 with interim targets of 59 in 21/22 and 62 in 22/23. There are

AUDIT & CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

discussions on withdrawing this target as it does not focus on outcomes. What we really want is a decrease in environmental crime. If we are successful in reducing it, we wouldn't need to issue as many FPNs. (Assistant Director of Environmental Health)

It was noted that the service was likely to review the educational work it carried out in relation to environmental offences.

The Chair suggested that it would be beneficial to see targets other neighbouring authorities set (like North East Derbyshire District Council and Bassetlaw District Council) and have Council targets benchmarked against them, such as the standard voids target. The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager explained that the Council had put in a request to the East Midlands Performance Management Network, but a response had not been received.

Moving on to the Indicators section of the report, the Information, Engagement and Performance Manager also informed Members that target CSP 16 (% written complaints responded to in 15 working days) had been missed because of the flexible retirement of the Customer Standards and Complaints Officer.

(Mark Surridge - Mazars Director - Audit & Assurance entered the meeting at this point.)

The Scrutiny and Elections Officer referred to ENV.06 (fixed penalties) and asked if a separate target could be included on how many of the FPNs issued were for dog fouling. The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager indicated she would discuss the possibility with the Assistant Director for Environmental Health.

Councillor Jen Wilson (Chair of Local Growth Scrutiny Committee) referred to some of the missed targets for rent arrears, and felt it should be considered that COVID was making it difficult for tenants to pay rent. The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager explained that the Council had reduced the number of rent arrears in the last year.

RESOLVED that the quarterly outturns against the Council Ambition 2020-2024 targets and relevant performance indicators be noted.

ACO10-21/22 REPORT OF EXTERNAL AUDIT

Mark Surridge (Mazars Director - Audit & Assurance) presented the Mazars Audit Strategy Memorandum for the year ending 31st March 2022. The report included:

1. Engagement and responsibilities summary
2. Audit engagement team
3. Audit scope, approach and timeline
4. Significant risks and other key judgement areas
5. Value for money
6. Fees for audit and other services
7. Commitment to independence
8. Materiality and misstatements

The Mazars Director - Audit & Assurance drew Members' attention to the 'Wider reporting and electors' rights' heading in section 1, and explained that the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 required Mazars to give an elector (or any representative of the

AUDIT & CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

elector) the opportunity to question them about the accounting records of the Council.

He explained that the financial statements were planned for completion by November 2022, and he was confident this target would be met potentially by the end of September. He also explained that section 4 outlined some of the risks relevant to the audit of financial statements, which were:

1. Management override of controls
2. Net defined benefit liability valuation
3. Valuation of land, building, council dwellings and investment properties

The Treasurer left the meeting at this point. The Principal Accountant joined the meeting at this point.

Members thanked the Mazars Director for his report.

RESOLVED that the report of the External Auditor be noted.

The meeting concluded at 10:53 hours.