

Governance Committee

Thursday, 16 January 2014

Present: Councillor Paul Leadbetter (Chair), and Councillors Anthony Gee, Marie Gray, June Molyneaux and Alan Platt

Also in attendance

Officer: Chris Moister (Head of Governance), Dawn Highton (Principal Auditor), Michael Jackson (Principal Financial Accountant) and Louise Wingfield (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

14.G.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Graham Dunn, Julia Berry and Alison Hansford, Gary Hall, and Peter Ripley (Independent Person).

14.G.2 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That subject to the following amendment the minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on 12 September 2013 be confirmed as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

That the report on the Mobile Phone Review would not taken to the Member Support Working Group for information as indicated in the minutes, but be provided to Cllr Alison Hansford. Dawn Highton confirmed that this was completed.

14.G.3 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No declarations of any interest were received.

14.G.4 RIPA APPLICATION UPDATE

The Head of Governance provided an update on RIPA. There were no RIPA applications to report, however it was suggested that this would remain as a standing item on this agenda.

RESOLVED: That RIPA would remain as a standing item on this committee agenda.

14.G.5 AUDIT COMMISSION REPORT: PROTECTING THE PUBLIC PURSE 2013

The Head of Governance submitted a report informing Members of a recent report from the Audit Commission addressing issues of fraud against local authorities and making recommendations as to improvements that Councils can make and to confirm to Members the actions Chorley Council take to address fraud.

In November the Audit Commission issued a report Protecting the Public Purse 2013: Fighting fraud against local government. The report seeks to address the issue of fraud against local government and highlights areas of best practice.

Chorley Council is proactive in detecting fraud, and has robust procedures in place; taking part in the National Fraud Initiative since its inception.

It was recommended in order to safeguard the Council that the Chair and Vice chair should look at the procedures and report back to the Governance Committee at its next meeting in March.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the report be noted**
- 2. That the Chair and Vice chair would meet with the Head of Governance to review the policies and processes and report back to the next Committee.**

14.G.6 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT 2013 - PROGRESS REPORT

The Head of Governance presented a report updating the Committee on the progress made in implementing the Council's Annual Governance Statement which provides for improvements to the Council's Governance arrangements. The Committee approved the Council's Annual Governance Statement in June 2013, and this report provides a position statement for each project.

There is currently one project that is orange and two that are red, full reasons for this are reported within the report in the agenda.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

14.G.7 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2012/13

The Committee received a report of our external auditor that provided a summary of the work carried out by them at Chorley Council for the year ended 31 March 2013.

The letter is intended to communicate key messages to the Council and external stakeholders, including members of the public. The report includes the audit conclusions which were provided in relation to 2012/13.

The work on certification of grant claims is now completed and the detailed findings are reported in the Grant Certification report later on the agenda.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

14.G.8 CERTIFICATION REPORT 2012/13

A report of the Council's External Auditors, Grant Thornton was received by the Committee. As part of the work they undertake they are required to certify certain of the claims and returns submitted by Chorley Council.

The report summarises the overall assessment of the Council's management arrangements in respect of the certification process and draws attention to significant matters in relation to individual claims.

There were two issues identified but not that affected the Council's ability to claim. The level of supporting working papers was good, and the auditor thanked Council Officers for their assistance and co-operation.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

14.G.9 GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE 2013/14

The Committee received a report of Grant Thornton that provided progress made in delivering their responsibilities as our external auditors.

The report included a number of challenge questions in respect of any emerging issues which the Committee may wish to consider. The Committee asked if it was possible to have a summary of these questions answered in advance.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

14.G.10 INTERNAL AUDIT INTERIM REPORT AS AT 29 NOVEMBER 2013

The Head of Shared Assurance Services submitted a report advising Members of the work that had been undertaken in respect of the Internal Audit Plans for Chorley Council and Shared Financial Services for the period August 2013 to November 2013.

The report indicates that at this stage the Audit Plans are on target to be achieved and all performance indicators are on or exceeding target. Five pieces of work have been completed and management actions have been agreed with Heads of Service.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Chair