

Minutes of **Governance Committee**

Meeting date **Wednesday, 18 January 2023**

Members present: Councillor Debra Platt (Chair), and Councillors Sam Chapman, Gordon France, Margaret France, Michelle Le Marinel, Dedrah Moss and Neville Whitham

Members present virtually (non-voting): Councillor Mark Clifford

Officers: Louise Mattinson (Director of Finance), Chris Moister (Director of Governance), Dawn Highton (Head of Audit and Risk), Jacqui Murray (Senior Auditor) and Nina Neisser (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Other Members: Councillor Charlotte Fitch (Independent Person) and Peter Ripley (Independent Person) and Georgia Jones (Grant Thornton UK LLP)

23.G.33 Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 23 November 2022 of Governance Committee

Resolved – That the minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on 23 November 2022 be confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

23.G.34 Declarations of Any Interests

There were no declarations of any interests.

23.G.35 External Audit Findings Report

Georgia Jones, Grant Thornton presented the report of the External Auditor which summarises the key findings and other matters arising from the statutory audit of Chorley Borough Council and the preparation of the group and Council’s financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022.

The Committee recalled that the Audit Findings Report was considered at the previous meeting on 23 November 2022 with some work still being completed. Members were noted that this was the final version of the External Audit Findings Report.

Members were advised of an additional recommendation in relation to Journals in the Action Plan which has been identified and Management have given their response. The audit adjustments have also been included as considered by the Committee at the previous meeting. The adjustments make no overall difference to the findings or to the

Council's financial position. The Committee noted that the audit opinion was signed on 10 January 2023 and the financial statements audit was subsequently complete.

Following queries, Members were advised that the External Auditors financial statements work does not rely on the work of Internal Audit but considers it as part of the risk assessments. The Interim Audit report will be considered in the risk assessments for the 2022/23 Audit Findings and as the Value for Money (VfM) work is in progress this will be taken into account before the VfM is complete.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

23.G.36 Annual Governance Statement Management Actions Update

Chris Moister, Director of Governance presented the update report to Members on the progress of implementation of the Management Actions supporting the Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22.

The Committee recalled approving the Annual Governance Statement for the year 2021/22 in May 2022. Whilst no significant governance failings were identified, members approved a number of improvement actions to be undertaken. The report contains the key themes of process/system, staff development and corporate as well as actions and works done to date to progress them. A comprehensive update will be provided to Members in the next Annual Governance Statement.

Resolved - That Members noted the progress in the report.

23.G.37 RIPA Application Update

Chris Moister, Monitoring Officer reported that no RIPA applications had been made.

23.G.38 Work Programme

The Committee considered the work programme for 2022/23 which set out the reports to be considered at each Governance Committee meeting throughout the Council year.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted.

23.G.39 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Councillor Sam Chapman registered an objection to the Audit and Risk Interim Report being considered fully in part two, and although recognised that there was a need for some elements of the report to be considered this way it was suggested that the report could have been separated to allow for any part one information to be publicly debated. He also expressed disappointment at the Governance Committee's lack of advanced notice of the contents of the report prior to agenda publication.

Resolved - To exclude the press and public for the following items of business on the grounds they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

23.G.40 **Audit and Risk Interim Report as at 31st December 2022**

Dawn Highton, Head of Audit and Risk presented the confidential report which advises members of the work undertaken in respect of the Internal Audit Plan from September 2022 to December 2022 and gives an appraisal of the Internal Audit Service's performance to date. The report also provides information for members regarding wider work of the Audit and Risk Service.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Debra Platt and seconded by Councillor Sam Chapman that the report be taken for consideration at Full Council at the earliest opportunity. This proposal was put to the vote and recorded as follows:

For: Councillors Debra Platt and Sam Chapman

Against: Councillors Gordon France, Margaret France, Michelle Le Marinel, Dedrah Moss and Neville Whitham

The vote was lost (2:5:0).

Subsequently, it was proposed that the Governance Committee write to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for it to consider the report as a matter of urgency. The proposal was put to the vote.

Members **resolved (unanimously) –**

- 1. that the Governance Committee write to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for it to consider the Audit and Risk Interim Report as a matter of urgency.**
- 2. that the position with regard to the Internal Audit Plan and the work of the wider Service be noted.**

Chair

Date