

Governance Committee

1. This report summarises the business undertaken at the Governance Committee meeting held on 18 January 2023.

General Report of the Meeting Held on 18 January 2023

External Audit Findings Report

2. Georgia Jones, Grant Thornton presented the report of the External Auditor which summarised 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.
3. We recalled that the Audit Findings Report was considered at the previous meeting on 23 November 2022 with some work still being completed. We noted that this was the final version of the External Audit Findings Report.
4. We were advised of an additional recommendation in relation to Journals in the Action Plan which had been identified and Management had given their response. The audit adjustments were included as considered by the Committee at the previous meeting. The adjustments made no overall difference to the findings or to the Council's financial position. We noted that the audit opinion was signed on 10 January 2023 and the financial statements audit was subsequently complete.
5. Following queries, we 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 would be considered in the risk assessments for the 2022/23 Audit Findings and as the Value for Money (VfM) work was in progress this would be taken into account before the VfM is complete. We noted the report.

Annual Governance Statement Management Actions Update

6. 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.
7. We 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. We noted the report.

RIPA Application Update

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

Work Programme

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

Exclusion of Press and Public

10. 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.

Audit and Risk Interim Report as at 31st December 2022.

11. Dawn Highton, Head of Audit and Risk presented the confidential report which advised members of the work undertaken in respect of the Internal Audit Plan from September 2022 to December 2022 and gave an appraisal of the Internal Audit Service's performance to date. The report also provided information for members regarding wider work of the Audit and Risk Service.
12. 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).
13. 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 and approved. We noted the report.

Recommendations

14. To note the report.

Councillor Debra Platt
Chair of the Governance Committee

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