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## **Governance & Resources Committee**

**Minutes of a Governance & Resources Committee meeting held at 6.00 pm on Thursday, 18th July, 2024 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Matlock, DE4 3NN.**

### **PRESENT**

Councillor Nick Wilton - In the Chair

Councillors: Neil Buttle, Anthony Bates, Bob Butcher, Gareth Gee, Dawn Greatorex, Steve Flitter, Roger Shelley, Marilyn Franks and Susan Hobson

Glenn Burton (Digital Transformation Project Manager), Jim Fearn (Communications & Marketing Manager), Lucy Harrison (Democratic Services Assistant), Karen Henriksen (Director of Resources), Caroline Leatherday (Business Support Manager), Helen Mitchell (Director of Corporate and Customer Services (Monitoring Officer)), Alastair Newall (Mazars LLP) and Jenny Williams (Head of the Internal Audit Consortium)

### **Note:**

*"Opinions expressed or statements made by individual persons during the public participation part of a Council or committee meeting are not the opinions or statements of Derbyshire Dales District Council. These comments are made by individuals who have exercised the provisions of the Council's Constitution to address a specific meeting. The Council therefore accepts no liability for any defamatory remarks that are made during a meeting that are replicated on this document."*

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor(s): Geoff Bond, David Hughes and Simon Ripton

### **59/24 - APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was moved by Councillor Marilyn Franks, seconded by Councillor Nick Wilton and

### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Governance and Resources Committee held on 21 March 2024 be approved as a correct record.

## **Voting**

**04 For**

**00 Against**

**04 Abstentions**

The Chair declared the motion **CARRIED**.

## **60/24 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

## **61/24 - INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **62/24 - QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO RULE OF PROCEDURE NUMBER 15**

No questions were received.

## **63/24 - EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT**

The external auditor, Alastair Newall, from Forvis Mazars LLP introduced a report providing the Committee with updates on the status of the external audit and on the national audit 'backstop' position. The external auditor had indicated that he would like to provide regular progress reports to the Governance and Resources Committee.

The External Audit Progress Report was detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. The key issues in the Audit Progress Report were detailed in section 2.2 of the report. The external auditor informed Members that, following national consultations and the proposals from the National Audit Office (NAO), the external auditor would be bringing a report to the Committee in October or December summarising work on value for money in 2023/24.

It was moved by Councillor Steve Flitter, seconded by Councillor Neil Buttle and

**RESOLVED** (unanimously)

That the External Audit Progress Report shown in Appendix 1 be received.

The Chair declared the motion **CARRIED**.

**18:06 – Councillor Roger Shelley and Councillor Bob Butcher entered the meeting.**

## **64/24 - EXTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY MEMORANDUM FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2024**

The external auditor introduced a report which provided information about the upcoming external audit relating to the financial year 2023/24.

It was noted that the Council's external auditor, Forvis Mazars LLP, had provided an Audit Strategy Memorandum on an annual basis which covered the forthcoming audit of the Council's financial statements. This document, included at Appendix 1 to the report,

summarised the audit approach, highlighted significant audit risks and areas of key judgements, and provided the Committee with details of the audit team.

The external auditor requested that the Audit Strategy Memorandum for financial accounts for the year ending 31 March 2024 be brought to Members' attention. It was noted within the report that the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (amended) stated the deadline for the completion of the audit relation to the 2023/24 accounts as 30 September 2024. Members were presented with details of the audit scope, approach and timeline, they were also informed of the intention for the audit to be completed in time for a report on the outcome to be presented to the Committee in December.

It was highlighted that on page 19 of Appendix 1 to the report, reference was made to significant difficulties that might be encountered during the course of audit, however it was noted that the Council had not encountered any of these difficulties.

It was moved by Councillor Dawn Greatorex, seconded by Councillor Roger Shelley and

**RESOLVED** (unanimously)

That the External Audit Strategy Memorandum for the year ending 31 March 2024 be received and agreed.

The Chair declared the motion **CARRIED**.

#### **65/24 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023/24**

The Director of Resources introduced the Annual Governance Statement providing an annual review of the Council's governance arrangements. The report showed the extent to which the Council had complied with its own code of governance and described any significant governance issues, alongside an explanation of what actions had been taken to bring about required improvements, and what work was still to be done.

It was noted within the report that confidence in public sector governance was of critical importance given the significant investments by the government and council taxpayers in local services. Members were informed that the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) should not be seen as a dry financial requirement, but as an important public expression of what the Council has done to put in place good business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance.

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24. It was consistent with the CIPFA/SOLACE publication 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'. The layout of the Annual Governance Statement reflected the layout of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance and the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance. It also took into account of the standards and requirements of the CIPFA Financial Management Code.

It was moved by Councillor Roger Shelley, seconded by Councillor Anthony Bates and

**RESOLVED** (unanimously)

1. That the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24 is approved.
2. That the significant governance issues be noted and the action plan to address them be approved.

The Chair declared the motion **CARRIED**.

## **66/24 - PRODUCTIVITY PLAN**

The Director of Corporate and Customer Services and Digital Transformation Project Manager introduced a report outlining the proposed submission of a Productivity Plan for Derbyshire Dales District Council to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

It was noted that the 2024/25 Local Government Financial Settlement mandated local authorities to formulate productivity plans as a prerequisite for accessing additional funding. These plans were designed to showcase how local authorities would enhance service performance and curb wasteful expenditure, serving as a mechanism for the government to assess performance against published plans for future funding decisions. The outlined requirements encompassed various key areas as detailed in 1.1 of the report.

On 14 April 2024, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities corresponded as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, with local authorities to elaborate on the initial mandate and delineate the framework for these productivity plans. The communication confirmed the deadline for plan submission as 19 July 2024.

Drawing from the expanded themes outlined in the correspondence and internal consultation with the Corporate Leadership team, the attached proposal for a Productivity Plan as attached at Appendix 2 had been developed.

It was moved by Councillor Steve Flitter, seconded by Councillor Bob Butcher and

**RESOLVED** (unanimously)

1. That the committee approves the Productivity Plan.

The Chair declared the motion **CARRIED**.

## **67/24 - RISK MANAGEMENT - ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**

The Director of Resources introduced a report which informed Members of the Council's risk management processes and working practices, which ensure risk management arrangements continue to be effective, timely and fit for purpose, providing the Council with the correct levels of insight and support in relation to its risk exposure.

The Council's Risk Management Policy and Strategy, approved by the Committee in September 2023, required the Chief Executive to report to Members, by way of an annual report on the Council's Risk Management arrangements and how key strategic risks are being managed.

Members were informed that the Council operates a risk management programme whereby risks associated with the Corporate Plan, its key strategic objectives and individual Service Plan Key Action were formally assessed. It was noted that the Council identifies risks at two levels as detailed in section 1.3 of the report.

The Council remained committed to ongoing risk management activities, risk management practices and procedures were well embedded, and the Risk Continuity Group continued to

be well attended. The key actions arising since the last annual report were included in 2.1 of the report.

It was moved by Councillor Sue Hobson, seconded by Councillor Dawn Greatorex and

**RESOLVED** (unanimously)

That the annual report and risk management arrangements be approved.

The Chair declared the motion **CARRIED**.

## **68/24 - COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING STRATEGY - ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25**

The Communications and Marketing Manager introduced a report on the Communication and Marketing Strategy, setting out how residents, employees and service users are kept informed about what the Council was doing, how it was spending public money and the Council services they can access.

Members were informed that the Council adopted its current Communications and Marketing Strategy in September 2014, reflecting the development of technology and the needs both of the public and the Council, which had evolved dramatically since the previous strategy's adoption in 2011. The report was the ninth annual update, setting ambitious yet realistic targets to support the Council's Corporate Objectives and core values.

The Strategy as attached at Appendix 1 to the report is without a timeframe. This is deliberate and sought to set a strategic framework with a more dynamic approach to actions which could be measured by way of an Annual Action Plan, monitored by a Communications and Marketing Hub, comprising officers from all Council service areas.

Section 2 of the report outlined the Review of the 2023/24 Action Plan and Section 3 detailed the New Action Plan for 2024/25.

It was moved by Councillor Susan Hobson, seconded by Councillor Anthony Bates and

**RESOLVED** (unanimously)

1. That the strategic framework of the current Communications and Marketing Strategy is noted.
2. That the Action Plan for 2024/25 is approved.

The Chair declared the motion **CARRIED**.

## **69/24 - WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE YEAR AHEAD**

The Chair invited Members of the Committee to give suggestions for training they would like to undertake in relation to Governance and Resources. It was noted that there was some financial funding available should Members want training in this area.

Councillor Gee noted that in the past he had received treasury management training and had found it useful. It was noted that this training session had put emphasis on what you couldn't do as a Council with your resources, and it was suggested that in a future session it would be good to get an insight into what the Council can do with its resources.

The External Auditor, Alistair Newall, suggested that if Members wanted further insight into the role of the external audit he would be happy to input.

It was agreed that this would be a standing item at future meetings of the Committee.

### **70/24 - INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2023/24**

The Head of the Internal Audit Consortium introduced a report presenting the 2023/24 Internal Audit Annual Report for the Council and the Head of Internal Audit's opinion on the adequacy of the Council's arrangements for governance, risk management and control. The report enabled the Governance and Resources Committee to obtain necessary assurances on the overall arrangements of governance, risk management and control systems.

The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards require that the Head of Internal Audit delivers an annual audit opinion and report that can be used by the organisation to inform its Annual Governance Statement.

The 2023/24 Internal Audit Annual Report that includes the 2023/24 audit opinion for the Council was attached at Appendix 1. The Head of Internal Audit's opinion for 2023/24 set out in the attached annual report was detailed in section 2.3 of the report.

The report also provided a summary of the work undertaken by Internal Audit in 2023/24, information on the performance of the Internal Audit service, an assessment of conformance against the Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards (PSIAS) and the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP).

It was moved by Councillor Steve Flitter, seconded by Councillor Susan Hobson and

**RESOLVED** (unanimous)

That the 2023/24 Internal Audit Annual Report for Derbyshire Dales District Council and the overall assurance opinion on the Council's governance, risk management and control arrangements be accepted.

The Chair declared the motion **CARRIED**.

**19:05 – Councillor Susan Hobson left the meeting.**

### **71/24 - INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS UPDATE 2023/24**

The Head of the Internal Audit Consortium introduced a report presenting for members' information, the last progress update in respect of the 2023/2024 Internal Audit Plan and to provide assurance on the governance, risk and control arrangements in place. The report included a summary of internal audit reports issued since the last meeting of this committee and an update on the implementation of internal audit recommendations.

The 2023/24 Operational Audit Plan was approved by the Governance and Resources Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023. The plan provided a framework by which service functions were reviewed to test and report on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk and control arrangements in place.

The report also detailed the key internal audit reviews undertaken since the last meeting, overall progress on the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan and in implementing internal audit recommendations.

It was moved by Councillor Roger Shelley, seconded by Councillor Bob Butcher and

**RESOLVED** (unanimously)

1. That the report be received and noted.

The Chair declared the motion **CARRIED**.

**Meeting Closed: 7.09 pm**

**Chairman**