

Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 13 July 2016 at 10:00 am in the Elisabeth Room, Endeavour House, Ipswich.

Present: Councillors Michael Bond (Chairman), Jenny Antill (Vice-Chairman), David Busby, Len Jacklin, Bert Poole and Chris Punt.

Supporting officers present: Tim Ryder, Monitoring Officer, Mark Hodgson, Ernst & Young, Geoff Dobson, Director of Resource Management and Helen Taber-French (Committee Administrator)

1. Election of Vice-Chairman

On the proposition of Councillor Michael Bond, seconded by Councillor Len Jacklin, it was agreed that Councillor Jenny Antill be elected as the Vice-Chairman for 2016-2017 Municipal Year.

2. Public Participation Session

There were no requests to speak in the public participation session.

3. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

There were no apologies for absence or substitutions.

4. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There was no declaration of interest or dispensations.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Ernst and Young 2015/16 Audit Plan - Update

At Agenda Item 6 Mark Hodgson, Ernst and Young, provided a verbal update on the 2015-2016 Audit Plan.

The Committee heard that 2015/16 Audit Plan was on track and would be completed ready to report to the Committee on 28 September 2016. The issues previously raised had been addressed. It was noted that Suffolk County Council was in a good position.

Decision: The Committee agreed to note the update from Ernst and Young.

Reason for decision: The Committee was satisfied with the updated plan and the progress reported.

Alternative options: None considered.

Declarations of interest: None declared.

Dispensations: None noted.

7. Code of Corporate Governance

At Agenda Item 7 the Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director (Scrutiny and Monitoring) which provided the proposed amendments to the Council's Code of Corporate Governance in the light of the changes the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) had made to the Framework on Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.

Decision: The Committee agreed to recommend adoption of the revised Code of Corporate Governance (Appendix B) to Council.

Reason for decision: The Committee acknowledged that the Framework produced by CIPFA/SOLACE on Delivering Good Governance in Local Government had been revised. The Committee recognised that this was an opportune time for the County Council to review its own Code of Corporate Governance to ensure that it met best practice.

Reference was made to Appendix A of the report with regard to the delivery of services by other local district and borough councils and the County Council's correspondence with members of the public. The Committee was advised that when working with other local authorities it was essential for the County Council to be clear on the way it operated and what it expected from other authorities when delivering council services. The Committee acknowledged that there was a need to engage and encourage other authorities to understand and adopt the County Council's policies and procedures via partnership working agreements and contracts. In respect of correspondence with members of the public, the Committee recognised that this would be an issue to raise with the Customer Care Manager when the Annual Report on Compliments, Comments and Complaints was presented to the Committee, and to discuss the processes in place.

The Committee discussed how the principles of the code would be applied on a practical day-to day basis. It was noted that as a second line of defence policies and procedures were put in place by IT, Finance and Human Resources, which all employees should follow to ensure their work and the delivery of council services were carried out correctly. The first line of defence rested at a localised level where managers were responsible for overseeing that these policies and procedures were implemented properly. In situations when the policies and procedures were not followed the Audit Team provided the third line of defence by assessing and investigating the issue.

With regard to the sub-principles within the Good Governance Framework, the Committee was advised that these would be communicated to the relevant officers and should be considered when the Committee was reviewing the Annual Governance Statement.

Alternative options: It was suggested by a Councillor that the introductory paragraphs to the proposed Code could be reworded, but this was not supported by the Committee.

Declarations of interest: None declared

Dispensations: None noted.

8. Information Bulletin

The Committee noted the information bulletin.

Before the Committee considered the Forward Work Programme, the Chairman commented that the Audit Committee had requested a 12 month update on Eastern Facilities Management Solutions, now called Vertas. However, he noted that since the request was made four members of the Audit Committee, Councillor Antill, Councillor Poole, Councillor Jacklin and Councillor Busby, had become members of the 'Stakeholder Group for Wholly Owned Companies', and would be aware of any updates. On this basis the Chairman held a briefing with Ian Surtees, Group Managing Director and Duncan Johnson Non-Executive Director. The Chairman was satisfied that Vertas was being properly managed and had sufficient long term plans. In the circumstances the Chairman suggested that Committee members wishing to be updated on Vertas contact Ian Surtees directly.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee approved the Forward Work Programme at Agenda Item 9.

10. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 10.48 am.

Chairman

