



How to contact us

Write to: Manor House, Church Street,
Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 5EW

Email: ltc@littlehampton-tc.gov.uk

Call: 01903 732063

Find us online: www.littlehampton-tc.gov.uk

Minutes of a Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held in The New Millennium Chamber, Manor House, Church Street, Littlehampton BN17 5EW on TUESDAY 8 February 2022 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Northeast – Chair
Councillor Buckland
Councillor Butcher
Councillor Molloy
Councillor Price

2021 to 2022

1. Evacuation Procedures

The evacuation procedures were noted.

2. Filming of Council Meetings, Use of Social Media and Mobile Phones

The procedures were noted.

3. Apologies

There were none.

4. Declarations of Interest

Members and Officers were reminded to make any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or personal and/or prejudicial interests that they might have in relation to items on the Agenda. The standing declarations were noted. Councillor Northeast declared a personal interest as Chairman of the Keystone Centre Management Committee. This was noted and would be added to the standing declarations moving forward.

5. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2021, previously circulated, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

6. Chair's Report and Urgent Items

There were none.

7. Public Forum

There were no representations.

8. Officer's Reports

8.1. Internal Audit Report 2021 to 2022

The Committee considered a report, previously circulated, which set out the first Internal Audit Report for the financial year 2021 to 2022. The Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer explained the audit process and highlighted the key findings. These centered on the outcome of the External Audit, budget monitoring and reporting and debtors ledger. It was noted that the External Audit findings were the subject of a separate report on the Agenda.

The Internal Auditor had commented on the regularity of the budget monitoring reports recommending that they should be more timely and current, especially if the dates fell outside the Committee schedule. The Committee budget monitoring reports could be circulated to Members more frequently, however the Council's accounting systems were dated. Members therefore considered it would also be beneficial that options be explored to update these systems and proposals prepared for consideration by Council in the coming year. Regarding the outstanding debts, the Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer outlined the nature of the debts and that a review was underway to determine the best course of action for consideration by the Policy and Finance Committee.

Members were pleased to note that overall the Auditor was satisfied that the Council successfully maintained a strong system of financial control.

It was therefore **Resolved** that:

The Internal Auditor report for the 2021 to 2022 accounts and the action to implement the Auditor's recommendations be noted.

8.2. External Audit Report 2020 to 2021

The Committee considered a report, previously circulated, regarding the outcome of the External Audit for the financial year 2021 to 2022. The Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer explained that the slightly early publication of the signed Annual Return did not meet the publication requirements. As reported to Full Council, this had subsequently been challenged but found to be accurate. Whilst the timing had not affected the public's inspection rights, it had resulted in the Council receiving a qualified response to its submission which would be noted in next year's Return. It was

noted that the Auditor was satisfied with the financial reporting and it was therefore **Resolved** that:

The External Auditor Certificate, Report and findings for the 2020 to 2021 accounts be noted.

8.3. Annual Governance Review

The Committee considered a report, previously circulated, which set out the outcome of the annual review of the Town Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. In addition, the Committee was asked to consider a suggestion from the Monitoring Officer to strengthen the Code of Conduct.

The Town Council was recommended to insert a clause in its Code of Conduct to highlight that should a councillor fail to comply with the outcomes of a complaint investigation, that the non-compliance becomes a further breach of the Code. The recommendation was accepted, however, Members considered that this demonstrated the weakness of the Standards regime. Discussing the matter further Members concluded that this could be a further burden locally and should be raised at a higher level.

It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. Full Council be Recommended to approve the inclusion of the following clause in the Town Council's Code of Conduct "I will comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct".**
- 2. That the District Council Standards Committee be requested to consider making representations to Government seeking a tightening of the Standards Regime.**
- 3. The outcome of the Annual Governance Review and that no changes are required to the Town Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations at this time be noted.**

8.4. Annual Review of Internal Controls

The Committee considered a report, previously circulated, which set out the Town Council's Internal Controls for the Committee's consideration and approval. There was one minor change requiring reports to be saved to the shared drive following the Information Technology system upgrade and migration to the Cloud. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. The updated Council's Internal Control systems be approved.**
- 2. Council be Recommended to confirm that statements 2, 5, 6 and 7 of the Annual Governance Statement had been complied with.**

8.5. Annual Review of Corporate Risk Register

The Committee considered a report, previously circulated, which set out the Town Council's Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Procedures, together with the Council's Corporate Risk Register. These had been updated to reflect the need to establish a reserve fund to meet the future maintenance costs of the War Memorial and the slight increase in the level of risk attributed to inadequate staffing provision. Members considered these were prudent particularly in the case of the War Memorial which required care and expertise to maintain due to its age and Listed status. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. The Council's Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Procedure be approved and be RECOMMENDED to Council for approval.**
- 2. The updated Risk Register be RECOMMENDED to Council for approval.**

8.6. Complaints and Compliments Review 2021

The Committee considered a report, previously circulated, which set out the 2021 Register of Compliments and Complaints and were pleased to note the positive feedback complimenting staff. It was **Resolved** to:

Note the report.

9. Exempt Business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 7.08 pm.

Chair