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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 5 July 2022 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Northeast – Chair

Councillor Woodman

Councillor Blanchard-Cooper was present and substituted for Councillor Price

2022 to 2023

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 apologies from Councillors, Buckland, Molloy, Price, and Rhodes.

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 Blanchard-Cooper declared a personal interest as a Member of Arun District Council.

5. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2022, 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 members of the public present.

8. Officer's Reports

8.1. Internal Audit Report 2022 to 2023

8.1.1. The Committee considered a report, previously circulated, which set out the findings of the Internal Audit. The Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer explained the process and activities planned to address the points highlighted in the action plan. It was noted that as recommended by the Internal Auditor, a review of Earmarked Reserves would now take place each year as part of the budget setting process.

8.1.2. Regarding the debtors, action to recover outstanding monies, which had been hampered due to the unusual conditions over the last two years had now picked up. It was also noted that a debt recovery procedure and recommendations for write offs would be considered by the Policy and Finance Committee in September.

In all other respects, the main areas covered by the Audit were found to be in order with no further recommendations made.

It was therefore Resolved that:

The Internal Audit report for the year ending 31 March 2022 and the Action Plan be noted.

8.2. Schemes of Delegation Reviews

8.2.1. The Schemes of Delegation to Officers and Committees had recently been reviewed by the Town Clerk and the and Responsible Financial Officer. The review had concluded that minor changes were required to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers regarding job titles to bring it in line with the current staff structure. These were considered sensible and noted.

8.2.2. The Scheme of Delegation to Committees, had also been updated and service responsibilities corrected or removed where they no longer existed. A correction was proposed to reflect that the Ferry Service Funding Agreement was overseen by the Policy and Finance Committee. This had been questioned in the past and viewed as an anomaly that that needed to be addressed. There was a strong view that it was logical for the delegation to be with the Community Resources Committee alongside the Council's other Service Funding Agreements and tourism.

It was therefore Resolved that:

1. Council be recommended to confirm that going forward monitoring the Ferry Service Funding Agreement be delegated to the Community Resources Committee.
2. The outcome of the review of the Schemes of delegation be otherwise noted.

8.3. Complaints Policy Review

8.3.1. The Committee was invited to consider a revised Complaints Policy, previously circulated, which had been updated to reflect current practice. Members proceeded to review the proposed changes and a discussion ensued which focussed on the objectives of the policy and how feedback was used. It was thought that when compared to other sectors the policy could be further refined to better demonstrate the Council's commitment to using feedback to improve services.

8.3.2. Members also highlighted several areas where the language could be improved to signify the positive view adopted by the Council in handling these matters. Overall it was considered that the proposed changes, although a step in the right direction, could be developed further to reflect the importance of both positive and negative feedback to the Council.

It was therefore Resolved that:

The Committee's comments be taken forward and a revised policy developed for consideration by Council.

8.4. Draft Committee Workplan 2022 to 2023

The Committee received the 2022 to 2023 workplan, previously circulated. It was noted that the review of the Town Council's governance arrangements in February 2023 would be particularly important as the Council prepared for the Local Government Elections next May.

It was Resolved that:

The Committee Workplan 2022 to 2023 be approved.

9. Exempt Business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 7.16 pm.

Chair