

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 28TH JUNE, 2023

MEMBERS: Councillors Thomas Fawns, Nawshad Ali, Nelly Gyosheva, Elisa Morreale, Sabri Ozaydin (Chief Whip), Michael Rye OBE, Paul Pratt and Edward Smith

Officers:

Executive Director Resources, Interim Director of Finance, Head of Internal Audit and Risk Management, Director of Law and Governance, Head of Policy & Contract Development, Head of Procurement Services and Chief Accountant

Also Attending:

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from;
Cllr Joanne Laban, substituted by Cllr Edward Smith
Cllr Alessandro Georgiou substituted by Cllr Paul Pratt
Cllr Ayten Guzel
Penny Halliday (Acting Director of Meridian Water)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to item 5 Cllr Michael Rye declared that he was a Governor at St Andrews School (Enfield) CE Primary School.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 January and 16 March 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

4. 2022-23 ANNUAL COUNTER FRAUD REPORT

Gemma Young (Head of Internal Audit and Risk Management) presented this item highlighting the key points from the report, including overpayments being identified and potential savings of £2.6m, mainly through National Fraud Initiative data experts, right to buy clams and financial investigations.

An area of growth in the past year has been in secondary employment for example an Enfield employee having two full time jobs, where there have been 5 cases in Enfield. Training has been provided to prevent secondary employment issues and whistleblowing has been promoted.

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Responding to Members queries Officers explained they have gained 8 Council properties back this year and are keen to raise the recovery rate on housing fraud.

Members had a query on Council employees working arrangements, to which Officers explained that staff have job designations, most are flexible workers and will spend most of the time in the office. This has resulted in savings as less office space is required and a survey from staff which indicated staff believed their quality of life and wellbeing had improved from this policy.

Officers explained that the Registrar cannot share notification of death information to help with Blue Badge fraud as the information is held on behalf of the registrar general which have additional restrictions. The team has tools and search techniques to match data to prevent Blue Badge fraud.

Officers confirmed no staff are being cut from the Audit and Investigations team.

NOTED 2022-23 Annual Counter Fraud Report.

5. 2022-23 ANNUAL DATA PROTECTION OFFICER REPORT

Gemma Young (Head of Internal Audit and Risk Management) introduced the report which summarised 99 corporate breaches during the year, 5 referred to the ICO which all resulted in no further action. Data protection impact assessments format has been made more user friendly and run an awareness campaign on the new format. Corporate training has been delivered to staff and Members including Lunch & Learn sessions. Specific training was provided for staff in the People department.

There has been positive engagement from Schools, 44 breaches were reported, 9 of which met the threshold to be reported to the ICO. No further action was taken as the schools had taken steps to mitigate the risks.

Officers confirmed that no members had lost a device, and no person had lost more than one device. If a device is lost it can be wiped remotely.

NOTED The 2022-23 Annual Data Protection Officer Report.

6. 2022-23 ANNUAL REPORT ON CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES, WAIVERS AND PROCUREMENT SERVICES UPDATE

Claire Rilley (Head of Policy and Contract Development) and Michael Sprosson (Head of Procurement Services) presented this item highlighting the key points from the update report including the new procurement service and procurement bill.

The procurement bill requires new transparency which means more admin reporting work for the Council. The bill is going for its third and final reading in

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the house of commons, implementation is expected in October 2024.

ACTION: Michael Sprosson to send link to procurement self-service intranet page

In response to Members queries on low carbon footprint measures, officers explained that they do not have this yet but are working with the internal climate action team and external partners.

The local spend value is up £10m, Meridian water is included in this figure. Officers explained that contract procedure rules include how many local quotations are needed and there is good indication this has been going well.

Officers have been engaging with Enterprise Enfield organising events to bring buyers and sellers together. E learning has been running for local entrepreneurs and start-ups.

Following a query from Members, Officers confirmed that the translation service is a pay by use service and the cycle to work scheme is run by HMRC which has a £0 cost to the Council, but the money used for it goes through the Council. The waste collection software will optimise the efficiency of routes. The car park AMPR software helps to improve security and has the function to make charges for parking. Members commented that in future they wish to see contract lengths and costs included in the report.

ACTION: Claire Riley to confirm length and cost of the translation service contract.

Noted: The 2022-23 Annual Report on Contract Procedure Rules, Waivers and Procurement Services Update

7. BDO PROGRESS REPORT ON THE EXTERNAL AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS

Kevin Bartle (Interim Director of Finance) presented this item explaining that there is disappointment that BDO could not attend again, and would not be present in the July meeting despite Officers attempts to make them come.

The Government have requested in writing for auditors requiring them to bring their plans to the Committee. The majority of the 19/20 accounts audit has been completed; the infrastructure assets has not been done which is a national issue. They will be reporting back to us in October. The Government have appointed Neil Harrison to resolve the national audit issue and are committed to resolving the problem. Members expressed their dissatisfaction.

ACTION: The Leader to write to BDO to express the dissatisfaction and the

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expectation for them to attend the meetings of the General Purpose Committee and to provide an action plan to address how they will complete all audits up to 22/23.

BDO have offered to meet with the Chair of the Committee and Cabinet Member.

ACTION: Fay to arrange

NOTED: BDO Progress Report on the External Audit of Accounts

8. ARMS PROGRESS UPDATE

Gemma Young introduced the report explaining that the audit plan for 2022/23 is 85% complete and 15% in draft. The audit plan will be coming to the committee in July. Outstanding audit agreed actions will come to the committee with the relevant Directors.

Members had questions on what schools are doing to turn around their progress. Officers explained that it is too soon to follow up as the school has agreed actions within time limits. This will be reported back to committee in due course.

Officers confirmed it is common practice for the Chief Executive to make an audit request, the Dugdale has a potential overspend and a Senior Officer had left the Council upon it opening.

Kevin Bartle (Interim Director of Finance) confirmed his team have now provided the information required on their audit in relation to budget and forecasting. Colleagues are confident the actions in place will be sufficient. Gemma's team are looking into this.

NOTED: ARMS Progress Update

9. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Kevin Bartle and Annette Trigg introduced the item confirming that Enfield Council achieved publication and was one of eight London Boroughs to meet the deadline. The 20/21 accounts are 60% complete on our side.

Following a query from Members, officers explained that the fundamental issue is that there is no deadline date to complete the audit in statutory terms. PSA previously attended the committee and explained the new contracting arrangements and the clauses within that which include not being paid in advance.

Officers explained that there is a statutory deadline for the NHS audits but not for local authorities.

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NOTED Statement of Accounts

10. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Kevin Bartle presented this item, highlighting the key points.

The Finance Improvement Board is moving to be called Financial Resilience Board, which is an internal board which was set up 2 years ago to drive continuous finance improvement. The Board is chaired by the Finance Director.

Members from the opposition commented that they did not agree the new Council Plan or Council Tax scheme.

Following a query from Members, officers confirmed the reserves have reduced by £30m by the end of March 2023.

AGREED to approve the draft 2022-23 AGS for inclusion in the Council's draft 2022-23 annual accounts.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NOTED the future meeting dates.

12. PART 2 - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

AGREED to pass a resolution under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 excluding the press and public from the meeting for the items of business listed on part 2 of the agenda on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in those paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006).

13. MERIDIAN WATER RISK REGISTER

The confidential report provided an update on the Meridian Water Risk Register.

AGREED that the report be noted.

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified.