

MINUTES of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Held at Epping Hall, St. John's Road, Epping on **Tuesday 22nd October 2019 at 6pm.**

PRESENT: Cllr M Wright (Chairman & Deputy Town Mayor)
Cllr G Scruton (Town Mayor & Key Member Finance)
Cllr N Avey (Key Member Administration)

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr Mrs C McCredie

OFFICER: Beverley Rumsey (Town Clerk)

265 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

266 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

267 DISPENSATIONS

There were no dispensations.

268 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions or comments.

269 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Corporate Governance Committee held on 26th February 2019 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

270 STATUS OF PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations of the CGAC from their meeting on 26th February 2019 (Minutes #527–552 of 19/20) were adopted by Council at the Ordinary Council meeting on 12th March 2019 (Minute #587 of 19/20):

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Audit Commission Act s9 to 11 and the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011.
- (ii) The revised Standing Orders should be **ADOPTED** by Council (~~CGAC Attachment B~~);
- (iii) The Financial Regulations should be **ADOPTED** by Council with no amendments (~~CGAC Attachment C~~);
- (iv) Financial Regulation 4.5 (a) should be **APPROVED** to remain;

- (v) The revised internal risk register (~~CGAC Attachment D~~) should be **ADOPTED** by Council;
- (vi) Council should continue to record assets as individual items with a value equal to or greater than £1000 in the Asset Register;
- (vii) The Asset Register 2019 (~~CGAC Attachment F~~) should be **APPROVED** as a correct record of Council's assets at the time;
- (viii) Any revisions will be presented to full Council;
- (ix) Council's Data Protection Policy (~~CGAC Attachment G1~~) should be **ADOPTED** as a policy of Epping Town Council;
- (x) Council's Privacy Statement (~~CGAC Attachment G2~~) should be **ADOPTED** as a policy of Epping Town Council;
- (xi) Council's Publication Scheme (~~CGAC Attachment H~~) should be **ADOPTED** as a policy of Epping Town Council, with revised photocopying charges;
- (xii) Council's Complaints Procedure (~~CGAC Attachment I~~) should be **ADOPTED** as a policy of Epping Town Council with no amendments;
- (xiii) Council's Health & Safety Policy (~~CGAC Attachment J~~) should be **ADOPTED** as a policy of Epping Town Council, with the highlighted amendments;
- (xiv) Council's Equality Policy (~~CGAC Attachment K~~) should be **ADOPTED** as a policy of Epping Town Council with no amendments;
- (xv) Council's Media Policy (~~CGAC Attachment L~~) should be **ADOPTED** as a policy of Epping Town Council, with the amendments highlighted;
- (xvi) Council's Social Media Policy (~~CGAC Attachment M~~) should be **ADOPTED** as a policy of Epping Town Council with no amendments;
- (xvii) Council's Community Engagement Policy (~~CGAC Attachment N~~) should be **ADOPTED** as a policy of Epping Town Council, with the amendments highlighted;
- (xviii) Epping Town Council should employ the same external Data Protection Officer from 2018/19 for 2019/20, at a cost of £250-£300 for the year. **(Please see agenda item 15 and Minute number #279 of 2019/20).**

Committee **NOTED** the above information.

271 **PREVIOUS OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS**

There were no previous outstanding recommendations.

272 **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE DOCUMENT REVIEW**

Council **APPROVED** a review of policy and governance documents at the Ordinary Council meeting on 8th March 2016 (Minute #478 of 2015/16).

The list of policies for annual review and the dates for review are as follows:

Internal and External Audits: **February 2019 & October 2019 (Dealt with under items 10 & 11)**

Internal Audit Programme: October 2019

Statement on Internal Control: October 2019

Insurance Inventory: **February 2019 (Dealt with under agenda item 22)**

Asset Register: **February 2019 (Dealt with under agenda item 12)**

Internal Risk Register: **February 2019 (Dealt with under agenda item 9)**

Staffing Terms and Conditions: **February 2019 & October 2019 (Dealt with under item 24)**

Standing Orders & Financial Regulations: **February 2019 (Dealt with under agenda item 8)**

Employee Handbook: October 2019

Risk management statement: October 2019

Please note these are the current recommended review dates, but legislation may amend the dates if an earlier review is required.

Changing regulations and audit comments may add further items to this list.

The CGAC review process leads to recommendations to Council for amendments to documents to be made.

Committee **NOTED** the above information.

273 **INTERNAL AUDIT**

Statutory Basis: The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

Committee **NOTED** that the first visit of the internal auditor would be on 5th and 6th November 2019.

The internal audit report (first interim) would be brought to the Ordinary Council Meeting on 10th December 2019, once received.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) No further action was required at the current time.

274 **INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRAMME**

Statutory Basis: The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

Members **NOTED**, once again, that the internal auditing programme was reviewed at the Corporate Governance Advisory Committee meeting on 27th October 2015 and Auditing Solutions Ltd were appointed as Council's internal auditors for a further period of five years from 2015-2020, based on the scope and detail

provided. (Approved at the Ordinary Council meeting on 10th November 2015 (Minutes #249 and #267 of 2015/16 refer)).

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) No further action was required at the current time;
- (ii) This would be brought back to the Corporate Governance Advisory Committee for consideration at the February meeting.

275 EXTERNAL AUDIT

Statutory Basis: The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

Members **NOTED** the externally audited Annual Return for 2018/19. This report had previously been considered by Full Council at the Ordinary Council meeting on 8th October 2019. (Minute #254 of 2019/20).

The Town Clerk was pleased to report there were no qualifications or comments on the Annual Return (and therefore no matters needing attention).

276 REVIEW OF STATEMENT ON INTERNAL CONTROL AND RISK MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Statutory Basis: The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

Committee **CONSIDERED** the revised statement on internal control and revised risk management statement.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) Both revised statements should be **RECOMMENDED** for **APPROVAL** by Council.

277 EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

Committee **CONSIDERED** the employee handbook with no revisions.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The employee handbook with no revisions should be **RECOMMENDED** for **APPROVAL** by Council.

278 HALF-YEAR FINANCIAL SUMMARY POSITION

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s111

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 8th October 2019, Council approved the draft budgets as **working drafts** (first estimates) (Minute #253 of 2019/20) with second estimates to be discussed at the Ordinary Council meeting in November/December and the final budget set at the Ordinary Council meeting in January 2020.

Please note: no decisions on the precept levels had been agreed at this first meeting. Council's draft budget (first estimate) showed Council's half-year expenditure (on 3rd October 2018) was 52.4% of the agreed budget. Council's income to that date was 50% of the agreed budget.

The early projected outturn figure showed a deficit of £29,365 against a surplus budget of £1,168. This is due to some of the previous year's Stonards Hill refurbishment project expenditure being finalised in this financial year. Early adjustments to the market budget and possible lower than anticipated cemetery income may also contribute to this. This is subject to much change and the income/expenditure will continue to be monitored each month at full Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) No further action was required at the current time.

279 **GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION UPDATE**

Statutory Basis: General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679)

Committee discussed the general data protection regulation.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) Committee would **RECOMMEND** that the situation be monitored (on an ongoing basis) regarding using an external Data Protection Officer and this would be revisited if required.

280 **CARD PAYMENTS**

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s111

Committee discussed taking card payments.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) Taking card payments would not be **RECOMMENDED** at the current time, due to the costs involved and lack of necessity.

281 **FINANCIAL SYSTEMS**

Statutory Basis: The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 & Local Government Act 1972, s111

Committee discussed Epping Town Council's financial systems in relation to online payments.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) As no irregular BACS/online payments are made currently, no further action is required at this time;
- (ii) Should the decision be made to make BACS/online payments, this will need to be revisited with consideration given to the most appropriate method of dual authorisation;
- (iii) Any councillor authorisation in this area should be **RECOMMENDED** as undertaken in the office, but this should be fully assessed when it is reconsidered in the future.

282 TOWN COUNCILLOR EMAIL ADDRESSES

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s111

Committee discussed Epping Town councillors' email addresses and whether these should be for specific Town Council use only.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) Committee felt members should continue to use their own email addresses as they do currently, but take the necessary safety precautions themselves ;
- (ii) The Town Clerk should reissue some tips for the safeguarding of councillors email accounts and reminders on best practice.

283 INVESTMENT FUNDS

Statutory Basis: The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 & Local Government Act 1972, s111

Committee discussed the Public Sector Deposit Fund & Local Authorities' Property Fund and whether they may be suitable investment channels for Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) A meeting be scheduled to learn more about these Funds (as planned) and once more information is available, it will return to Committee or Council, as appropriate.

284 WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY

Statutory Basis: The Local Government Act 1972, s142 & the Local Government Act 1972, s111

Committee discussed the new accessibility requirements for Town Council websites that would be coming into effect in September 2020 and whether any external support would be needed to ensure compliancy.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) This would be brought back to Committee in February once more information was available.

285 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED** that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

286 **STAFF TERMS & CONDITIONS/PAYSCALES**

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

Committee **NOTED** that Epping Town Council staff are governed by the terms of conditions set by the NJC (National Joint Council) (set by NALC and SLCC). The current spine points were noted at the Corporate Governance Advisory Committee meeting on 26th February 2019 (Minute #550 of 2018/19).

Staff received a salary review in April 2019 (for 2018/19) and are expected to receive a further salary review in April 2020. The figures for 2020 are not yet available. In the 2019/20 budget first draft estimates, the Town Clerk has budgeted increases of 2% for staff above a certain scale point, with increases ranging from 3-6% for the lower scale points, in line with the 2018/19 increases. More accurate calculations will be made once the figures are available.

Members **NOTED** that the scale points were number regraded from 1st April 2019, to eliminate some of the lowest scale points and remain in line with minimum wage levels. The scales are lower in number, but constant in monetary terms. Increments will follow the same format as previously, though the values may vary year on year, depending on the level determined by the NJC.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) No further action was required at the current time.

287 **STAFFING MATTERS**

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

Committee **CONSIDERED** the staffing update and **RECOMMENDATION** as per **Attachment J**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The **RECOMMENDATION** of the Town Clerk be **RECOMMENDED** to Council for **APPROVAL**;
- (ii) No further action was required at the current time.

The Chairman closed the meeting at **6.58pm**.

(NB: The matters on this agenda have a statutory basis under the Local Government Act 1972 in sections 101 and 111, in addition to those stated.)

Signature of Chairman

Date