



**MINUTES of
AUDIT COMMITTEE
6 DECEMBER 2018**

PRESENT

Chairman	Councillor P G L Elliott
Vice-Chairman	Councillor E L Bamford
Councillors	A S Fluker, M S Heard, Miss M R Lewis, A K M St. Joseph and Mrs M E Thompson
Substitute Councillor(s)	Councillor S J Savage

682. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES

The Chairman drew attention to the list of notices published on the back of the agenda.

683. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor B E Harker. In accordance with Procedure Rule 17 (9,10) Councillor S J Savage attended as a substitute for Councillor B E Harker.

684. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 September 2018 were approved and confirmed.

685. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

There were none.

686. PERFORMANCE AGAINST 2018/19 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources, together with Appendix 1, detailing progress to date with regard to work completed and any deviances to, or slippage, on the Internal Audit Plan 2018 / 19.

Mr Greg Rubins, Head of Internal Audit, introduced himself and updated the Committee on the status of the audit reports. He said that progress had been made but that despite

best endeavours the final audits on *Budgets and Performance Management, Safe and Clean Environment* and *Main Financial Systems* were not available for this meeting and would be presented next time round. However, he assured the Committee that the final reports were positive, there was nothing to concern the Committee regarding the findings and he was confident that all reports would be completed by year end.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the progress against the 2018/19 Internal Audit Plan.

687. INTERNAL AUDIT - FOLLOW UP OF RECOMMENDATIONS AS AT 31 OCTOBER 2018

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources, together with Appendix 1, detailing progress on recommendations raised by Internal Audit for the years 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Mr Greg Rubins, Head of Internal Audit, presented the report to the Committee. He reported that he was very pleased with progress to date and Officers' response rates. The majority of recommendations were on track and those relating to the recommendation Channel shift would be dealt with separately, as part of the 'Future Council Model'. He was confident that all would be signed off next time round.

A question was raised regarding completion dates and it was agreed that it was incumbent on all involved to be more realistic going forwards when setting implementation dates.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the progress to date.

688. QUARTERLY REVIEW OF CORPORATE RISK

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources, together with Appendix 1, providing independent assurance to the Council on the adequacy of the risk management framework. It was noted that the Risk Management Policy required this Committee to undertake a quarterly review of the Corporate Risk Register as assurance that the corporate risks are being managed effectively.

The Director of Resources introduced the report advising the Committee that it provided an update on the position as at the end of Quarter 2 (30 September 2018) on the corporate risks included within the Corporate Risk Register 2018/19.

In response to a query regarding the risk score and how it's assessed it was noted that where plans are still on hold the risk remains static and where significant progress has taken place the risk score will reduce.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the static nature of the score and comment under Risk 14 – Unable to recruit and retain staff in a national skill shortage area to meet the demands of the service – and whether this was down to a freeze on recruitment. It was clarified that this referred to difficulties recruiting Planning Officers and that the issue was now resolved. The Committee agreed that both the comment and score be revised accordingly.

In response to a query on Risk 6 the Director of Resources confirmed that this was a 'corporate' risk, not district-wide and that the title would be revised to reflect this.

RESOLVED

- (i) that Members reviewed the information as set out in this report and Appendix 1 to the report and their views and comments were sought,
- (ii) that in undertaking this review Members were assured that corporate risk is being managed effectively.

689. ACTION PLAN OF FLOOD MITIGATION PROJECTS ACROSS THE DISTRICT

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance that provided Members with an amended action plan at Appendix 1 as agreed at this Committee on the 26 July 2018. The amendments aimed to clearly detail the various flood management projects being undertaken across the District, in conjunction with partners, and to clarify the purpose of the group and the goals it aims to achieve.

The Environmental Health Manager, presenting the report advised the Committee that the revised action plan would assist when reviewing the current risk score for corporate risk 6 "Failure to have a clear shared plan regarding strategic ownership of coastal, fluvial and surface water flooding mitigation and long term maintenance responsibilities".

She then took Members through the preamble, amendments and additions to the appendix since the last Committee, work achieved through partnership working. It was noted that there was still some feedback outstanding and it was difficult managing the various grant allocation for projects as Maldon District Council was not the 'gatekeeper' for this work. However, overall, this was a work in progress and the partners were engaging with Maldon District Council, in particular the Environment Agency. Furthermore the Council had taken the lead on a number of flood defence projects.

It was recognised that, maintenance aside, it was imperative to focus on the key risks, major projects and improvement of flood defences, in particular safeguarding the railway line to Southminster and the Causeway area. The Committee acknowledged that working alongside landowners, Essex County Council, other agencies and Network Rail will be crucial going forward to tackle the aforementioned issues.

It was agreed that the Action Plan at Appendix 1 to the report, updated on a six month basis, was a very useful way of monitoring the situation as it mapped all the issues pertaining to corporate risk. It was further agreed that the risk score for this corporate risk remain at 16.

The Chairman and Committee Members thanked the Environmental Health Manager for all her hard work in compiling the action plan.

RESOLVED that Members had noted the amendments to the action plan provided in Appendix 1 to the report and reviewed the current risk score as a result of the amendments.

There being no further items of business the Chairman closed the meeting at 4.06 pm.

P G L ELLIOTT
CHAIRMAN