



Councillor Karl Arthur – Chair of Audit and Governance Committee

The Committee has met once since the last update provided to the Council on 28 September 2021. The meeting took place on Wednesday 29 September 2021.

Audit and Governance Committee Meeting – 29 September 2021

This committee meeting had 14 agenda items on it. Amongst the items covered the committee considered the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report for the municipal years April 2019 to March 2020 and April 2020 to March 2021. Members were informed that the Local Authority Ombudsman was the final stage for corporate complaints made against local authorities and that during this period there had been a decrease in the number of complaints escalated to the Ombudsman against the Council and that none of these complaints had been upheld and that the Council showed a 100% record of implementation of any recommendations made by the Ombudsman.

It was further explained that Licensing and Democratic Services were part of the Legal service area which has recorded a total of three complaints and members noted that since the report had been written a licensing complaint had been resolved as it was a service request, a Democratic Services complaint had been referred to the Ombudsman and not been upheld; and a “right to buy” transaction which had experienced delays, had been resolved via the North Yorkshire County Council Better Together Legal Service. Following the discussion, the Committee was assured that the complaints process was operating effectively and to a high standard.

Members considered the Corporate Policy: Regulations of Investigating Powers Act 2020 (RIPA2020), version 2021 and heard that the Council had a duty under RIPA 2020 to demonstrate how requests for covert directed surveillance activities were determined and recorded. In response to a question regarding increasing the number of CCTVs within the district to counter act fly tipping, it was confirmed that if this was overt surveillance, which included signs being displayed next to cameras, additional CCTV could be installed.

If a serious case of fly tipping occurred, which was being investigated, and it was considered that covert CCTV be warranted, before use of the covert CCTV could take place that case would have to go through the RIPA process and onto the Magistrates Court for final approval before the cameras could be deployed. In response to queries from members as to which officers had been trained within the Council to authorise the deployment of covert cameras it was confirmed that the

determining officers were the Director of Economic Regeneration and Place, the Director of Corporate Services and the Head of Planning; with the Chief Executive dealing with cases which involved confidential information. It was further explained that the Enforcement Team had been trained to complete the application form to seek authorisation to deploy covert cameras. It was also confirmed that fly tipping was considered a serious enough offence to warrant covert CCTV but only on a case-by-case basis. Members noted the revised draft Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Policy.

Members received the Corporate Policy and Guidance: surveillance Overview Document and the Overt Surveillance Policy: Version 2021 and were informed that any overt surveillance policy by the council must be monitored in terms of its authorisation and use. The committee heard that the Information Governance policies had been refreshed, and that all policies had been drafted in association with Veritau, the Internal Auditors, who acted as the Councils Data Protection Officers. The Committee noted this report.

The Committee also considered the draft Statement of Accounts for 2020-21 which it approved subject to the completion and signing off of the Audit of the Accounts. In addition, the committee also received and considered:

- The External Audit Completion Report 2020-21; and
- The Quarterly Internal Audit, Counter Fraud and Information Governance progress reports from Veritau.

Both of which the Committee duly noted.

Next Meeting of the Committee

The next meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee will be taking place on Wednesday 26 January 2022 commencing at 5.00pm.

I commend my statement to the council.

Councillor Karl Arthur
Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee