



Councillor Karl Arthur – Chair of Audit and Governance Committee

Update to Council 20th February 2020

The Audit and Governance Committee has met once since the last update provided to the council on 17th December 2019. This meeting took place on Wednesday 29th January 2020.

Audit and Governance Committee Meeting – 29th January 2020

The Audit and Governance Committee agenda was very busy on 29th January 2020 - with no fewer than thirteen items on the agenda - and I would like to take this opportunity to thank committee members and officers for their support and comments during the course of the meeting.

Items discussed and noted included the Review of the Risk Management Strategy, the Corporate Risk Register for 2019-20 and a Review of the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan.

Members considered the External Audit Progress Report and asked for the re-circulation of the links to the national publications contained within the report so that they could read them at their leisure and then noted the report.

The senior solicitor presented the Annual Information Governance Report to the committee, and members asked what procedures were in place to mitigate against a falloff in the timelines of responses to freedom of information requests. The senior solicitor confirmed that the authority had a robust system in place to ensure that this would not happen, and that all requests were logged and tracked to ensure that any requests were responded to in a timely manner and within statutory time limits. The committee were informed that 88.7% of requests are answered on time against an authority target of 86%. Members noted the report.

The main items for discussion and scrutiny as far as this committee meeting agenda was the internal audit, counter fraud and information governance progress report where the committee:

- Queried, in the light of the number of audits about to be commenced, whether there was sufficient capacity to undertake all the work expected of them. In response it was explained that there was the capacity to carry out all the work expected as Veritau had a large team of auditors available;
- Raised concerns around the costs of detecting fraud and queried whether this money would be better spent protecting against or preventing fraud from occurring in the first place. The Chief Finance Officer informed members that

Veritau provided both fraud detection and prevention services and that a balance was needed between the two.

- A query was also raised in relation to the membership of the Central Information Governance Group (CIGG) – which has been set up to monitor progress of a new governance strategy that had been put in place to ensure that the authority was compliant with the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) – and whether any elected members sat on it. The Chief Finance Officer explained that it was an operational officer group which reported directly to her.
- Members also expressed an interest in the training sessions on Data Protection Rights and Principles which had already been delivered to staff employed by the authority. They felt that any such training be given in the evening or be able to be accessed on line so that members could do the training at their leisure. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that this training could be given to members.

The Committee discussed the Counter Fraud Framework update and approved the updated Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy Action Plan and noted the updated Counter Fraud Risk Assessment.

Finally, members reviewed the Audit Action Log and it was noted that the information requested in relation to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review letter had been circulated to the Committee and that therefore the actions were recorded as having been completed.

Audit Committee Member Training

A training session was held for Committee Members directly ahead of the meeting on the 29th January 2020 which focused on information governance. The training session was well attended and I would like to record my thanks to officers for providing this session, and also to members for their attendance and participation.

Change of Management at Veritau

The committee was informed that Veritau's lead manager at Selby District, Mr Phil Jeffrey, was attending his final meeting as he would be moving on to support a different authority. The committee thanked Mr Jeffrey for his input into the business of the Audit Committee and wished him well for his new role. The committee was introduced to and welcomed Mr Ed Martin who would be taking on the lead role for Selby going forward, and who was attending this meeting as an observer.

I commend my statement to the Council.

Councillor Karl Arthur

Chair, Audit and Governance Committee