

STANDARDS AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
8 SEPTEMBER 2016

(7.15 pm - 8.15 pm)

PRESENT Councillor Peter McCabe (in the Chair),
Councillor Janice Howard, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,
Councillor Adam Bush, Councillor Stephen Crowe,
Councillor Mary Curtin, Councillor John Dehaney,
Councillor Mary-Jane Jeanes, Councillor Ian Munn,
Councillor Marsie Skeete and Councillor Gregory Udeh

ALSO PRESENT: Stephen Bowsher, Chief Accountant
Brendan Bradley, Senior Accountant
Kim Brown, HR Lead
Paul Evans, Assistant Director Corporate Governance /
Monitoring Officer
Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services
Simon Williams, Director of Community & Housing
Susanne Wicks, Democratic Services Officer

Paul King and Simon Mathers, Ernst & Young

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor David Williams. Councillor Michael Bull was present as substitute.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The Democratic Services Officer outlined an amendment to item 11 on the draft minutes as follows:

DRAFT ACCOUNTS

Paragraph 6 to read: "With regard to the approval of the 2017/18 accounts, the Committee noted their wish to move the June 2018 meeting to late July in order to approve the accounts".

RESOLVED: That, subject to the amendment shown above, the minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2016 are agreed as an accurate record.

4 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda Item 7)

RESOLVED: That the public are excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following report(s) on the grounds that it is (they are) exempt from disclosure for the reasons stated in the report(s).

5 TEMPORARY AND CONTRACT STAFF UPDATE (Agenda Item 8)

At the suggestion of the Chair, the Committee agreed to reorder the agenda to take this item earlier.

The Director of Community and Housing, along with the HR Lead, Kim Brown, presented a detailed report of interim and temporary staff employed at a rate of £30 per hour or more.

Members of the Committee asked detailed questions to which officers responded.

The Chair asked that future reports show comparison with previous periods, so the Committee may identify trends and performance over the longer term.

Whilst noting the HR Lead's rigorous approach to scrutinising and challenging any request to recruit temporary or interim staff, the Chair suggested that it would be beneficial for departmental targets to be set to reduce the rates of non-permanent staff. The Director of Corporate Services advised that interim staff are engaged for a range of valid reasons, so it's likely that targets would not be met. The Chair acknowledged the point and suggested that targets should be set, with a proviso that there will be exceptional circumstances when it's recognised that an interim staff member is the only solution, e.g. to cover a finite project or inability to permanently recruit. The Director of Corporate Services undertook to discuss the imposition of targets with the Corporate Management Team.

RESOLVED: That the Standards and General Purposes Committee noted the progress made to monitor and control the use of temporary workers and consultants.

At the conclusion of this item, the Committee moved back into public session.

6 AUDITED FINAL ACCOUNTS 2015/16 (Agenda Item 4)

The report was introduced by the Director of Corporate Services, who advised that no material changes have been made to the draft accounts, which were presented to the June meeting of this Committee.

At the invitation of the Chair, Paul King (Executive Director, Ernst & Young) presented the Audit Results reports for both the Council and Pension Fund accounts.

Paul King outlined one matter to be brought to the Committee's attention; the auditors had identified an overstatement, relating to CIL, of £1m to both debtors and creditors. The overstatement has nil impact on the Council's net assets. He noted that this has no impact on the performance or position for the period, so it has been decided that

no adjustment was required. The Committee noted the decision not to amend the accounts and were satisfied with this approach.

With regard to Appendix C to the external audit report, the Committee asked questions regarding the independence of the external auditors and were satisfied that they were.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Committee asked a range of detailed questions, to which officers and external auditors responded.

RESOLVED: That the Standards and General Purposes Committee:

1. Approves the audited Statement of Accounts, including the Pension Fund Accounts (Appendix 2).
2. Notes any comments made by the Pensions Fund Advisory Panel regarding the Pension Fund Accounts.
3. Notes EY's Audit Results Report (Appendix 4) for the Pension Fund accounts under the International Standard on Auditing (ISA) 260.
4. Notes EY's Audit Results Report (Appendix 3) for the Statement of Accounts under the ISA 260.

And that the Chair of the Committee:

5. Signs the Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts (Appendix 2, page 154).
6. Signs Letters of Representation (Appendices 3 and 4) for the Statement of Accounts and Pension Fund Accounts.

7 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (RIPA) (Agenda Item 5)

The report was introduced by the Monitoring Officer, Paul Evans. He advised that no RIPA authorisations have been made since the last meeting of this Committee, but noted that the policy must be kept up to date and fit for purpose. In response to questions, Paul Evans advised that the use of RIPA is unlikely to increase, given the increased expectation that Enforcement Officers will use overt surveillance as much as possible.

With regard to the Office of the Surveillance Commissioners (OSC) recommendations following the inspection in January, Paul Evans undertook to report back to this Committee on the outcome of the review into juvenile test purchases and in particular the conclusion on whether they should be carried out under RIPA.

With regard to the Constitutional amendment, the Monitoring Officer reassured the Committee that the delegation presents no conflict of interest.

RESOLVED: That the Standards and General Purposes Committee

1. Notes the action taken to address the recommendations of an inspection report of the council's arrangements for dealing with applications under the Regulation

of Investigatory Powers Act.

2. Recommends to Council the update to Part 3-F of the Constitution, detailed within this report.
3. Approves the revised Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act policy and procedure.
4. Notes the purposes for which investigations have been authorised under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000.

8 COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS - VERBAL UPDATE FROM THE MONITORING OFFICER (Agenda Item 6)

The Monitoring Officer advised that no formal code of conduct complaints against members had been received since the last meeting of this Committee.

9 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 9)

Councillor Stephen Crowe suggested that a report on risk management should be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED: That the work programme is noted.

10 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON (Agenda Item 10)

The Monitoring Officer introduced this report.

RESOLVED: That the Standards and General Purposes Committee agrees that an interview panel, comprising one councillor from each political group, should be appointed to interview and recommend to Council the appointment of one Independent Person to serve for a period of three years.