

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Wednesday, 23 November 2022 commencing at 2:00 pm

Present:

Chair
Vice Chair

Councillor V D Smith
Councillor H C McLain

and Councillors:

C M Cody, P A Godwin, D W Gray, P D McLain and H S Munro

A&G.18 ANNOUNCEMENTS

18.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was taken an read.

A&G.19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

19.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J P Mills and P E Smith. There were no substitutes for the meeting.

A&G.20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

20.1 The Committee's attention was drawn to the Tewkesbury Borough Code of Conduct which was adopted by the Council on 26 June 2012 and took effect from 1 July 2012.

20.2 There were no declarations made on this occasion.

A&G.21 MINUTES

21.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2022, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

A&G.22 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

22.1 Attention was drawn to the Audit and Governance Committee Work Programme, circulated at Pages No. 13-20, which Members were asked to consider.

22.2 The Head of Corporate Services advised that a Special meeting of the Committee had been arranged for 12 December in order to approve the Statement of Accounts 2021/22 and Members were asked to attend a training session in relation to that later this week. It was noted that the external auditor's annual report had been moved to the meeting on 22 March 2023 due to resource issues within Grant Thornton and the annual report on the Council's arrangements for General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) had also been moved to a future meeting. A Member asked whether the Council would be reimbursed by Grant Thornton for the delays which had been experienced and the Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that no money would be paid back - there were savings in the

fee but there were also additional costs for extra time and work incurred in delivering the audit so there may be a small increase overall.

22.3 It was

RESOLVED That the Audit and Governance Committee Work Programme be **NOTED**.

A&G.23 COUNTER FRAUD AND ENFORCEMENT UNIT UPDATE

23.1 The report of the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit Head of Service, circulated at Pages No. 21-26, provided an update on the work of the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit. Members were asked to consider the report.

23.2 The Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit Head of Service drew attention to Pages No. 23, Paragraph 2.2 of the report, in relation to the Cabinet Office's National Fraud Initiative which was a data matching exercise to help prevent and detect fraud nationwide. She was pleased to advise that, since the publication of the Committee report, revenue from referring accounts to the Revenues department had increased to £85,747 and an additional housing application had been removed from the list bringing the total to 12. Paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6 of the report demonstrated that the enforcement arm of the Unit had assisted Planning and Housing with successful prosecutions. Training would shortly be taking place for Enforcement Officers on Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the update to the RIPA Surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Source Policy, which the Committee had been made aware of earlier in the year, with two sessions planned at the end of November and start of December. The Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit Head of Service advised that, following the work on COVID grants, counter fraud work was becoming an area of interest for central government. A strategic group had been set up locally with Trading Standards and the Police looking at victim support and how to raise awareness to disrupt and tackle scams to prevent people falling victim.

23.3 A Member drew attention to Paragraph 2.1 of the report and noted that almost £300,000 remained outstanding in relation to Business Grant Schemes which she felt was quite a lot of money. In response, the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit Head of Service advised that many businesses were suffering after the pandemic and as a result of the current cost of living crisis so Officers were mindful that money could not all be repaid in one go. The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that, whilst £300,000 looked a lot on its own, it was only 1% of the £30m which had been paid out and this position was much better than a number of other authorities. The work the team had done to put controls in place early in the process, when under extreme pressure to pay out as quickly as possible, had been essential in securing value for money and limiting fraud within the grants. The Member accepted the point but raised concern that payments had been made to businesses that were not trading or were empty. In response, the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit Head of Service advised that these were examples of the fraud people had been committing but it would not necessarily have been known that these were fraudulent claims at the time of the application. Officers were doing their best to recover the outstanding monies but being mindful that businesses were struggling to stay afloat.

23.4 Another Member asked what lessons had been learnt as, whilst she accepted what had been said by Officers, it was still a lot of money. The Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit Head of Service advised that, in her experience of the Councils she worked for, they had done a tremendously good job when compared to the amount of fraud and error in the furlough scheme, or other schemes administered outside of local government which used local knowledge to ensure that payments were made correctly. The main lesson learnt was the benefit of enlisting the

Internal Audit, Counter Fraud and Finance teams from the outset, prior to paying any money. There had been immense pressure to pay grants quickly and multiple schemes to understand so she hoped it was a one-off situation which would not be repeated. The Head of Finance and Asset Management felt that the biggest lessons learnt were for central government in terms of how to roll out schemes and the benefit of talking to local government to ensure the schemes were well designed and to deal with any obvious problems. The Member recognised a lot of excellent work was going on and she asked if the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit made any profit. In response, the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit Head of Service advised that Tewkesbury Borough Council was one of five partner bodies within the Unit - any 'profit' was taken off the overall cost of the Unit to keep partnership costs to a minimum. A report was provided around loss avoidance, recovered monies etc. to demonstrate that the Unit was value for money. A Member asked if it was possible to have a statement showing how much the Unit cost Tewkesbury Borough Council and how much money was saved and the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit Head of Service undertook to provide this. The Head of Finance and Asset Management indicated that Paragraph 2.2. of the report gave figures on increased revenue and loss avoidance and, to put this into perspective, the service cost the Council £60,000 per year which he considered to be excellent value for money in terms of the proactive work, and the strategy and policy work, which was done by the Unit to support the authority. In terms of the business support schemes, a Member expressed the view that speed had been so important as, if the schemes had not rolled out quickly, many businesses within the local economy would no longer exist. He felt that without a deterrent there would be far more attempts at fraudulent claims across a range of services. There was a small minority of people within every community that would look to abuse the system wherever possible and without structures such as the Unit in place, that would undoubtedly increase.

23.5 It was

RESOLVED That the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit update be
NOTED.

A&G.24 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

24.1 The report of the Head of Finance and Asset Management, circulated at Pages No. 27-51, asked Members to consider the risks contained within the corporate risk register and assurance that the risks were being effectively managed.

24.2 The Head of Corporate Services advised that the corporate risk register was a strategic document which was brought to each Audit and Governance Committee. The key updates since the last meeting were set out in the table at Page No. 29 of the report. It was noted that a lot of work had been done around Ref. 3 Cyber Security, which remained the biggest risk to the Council, and a review of individual service plans had commenced in relation to Ref. 5 Business Continuity. It was proposed to remove Ref. 6 Safeguarding as the arrangements were well managed with the annual report due for consideration later on today's Agenda. It was also proposed to remove Ref. 12 COVID-19 Recovery as the outstanding actions in the COVID-19 Recovery Plan had transitioned back to the Council Plan and the majority of services had returned to 'business as usual'. A considerable amount of work was underway in relation to Ref. 13 Climate Change including options for the replacement of the vehicle fleet from 2024. It was noted that three new risks had been added to the register – Ref. 16 Cost of Living Support which related to demand on services, Ref. 17 Migration which was around how the Council was supporting Ukrainian refugees and Ref. 18 Joint Strategic Plan.

- 24.3 A Member asked whether Ref. 13 Climate Change took into account savings and investments as, although there would be an associated cost, that would be even greater going forward if action was not taken now. With regard to Page No. 40, Ref. 9 Growth Hub, she asked whether the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) replaced the European funding which the Council had previously received and what the likelihood would be of the Growth Hub failing to deliver the necessary outputs and the capital grant having to be repaid. In response, the Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed that the UKSPF replaced the European funding and he advised that the Growth Hub was exceeding requirements so, as far as he was aware, there was no danger of having to return any money. He explained that the Growth Hub Navigator post had been in place for six years and was in the base budget for three. He was aware of the grant condition and the threat that posed so wanted to make sure the agreement was being delivered in line with that clause and he was satisfied with regard to that. The Head of Corporate Services recommended that the risk be removed as it was within the 'green' risk score. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had previously received an annual report on the Growth Hub but Members felt that was unnecessary given that they were happy with how it was operating.
- 24.4 A Member drew attention to Page No. 41, Ref. 10 Garden Town and indicated that she understood the costs in relation to the J9/A46 project had increased from £8m to £14m and the consultation had been delayed. The Committee had been due to receive an update on the consultation at its meeting in September but that had been cancelled so she asked for an indication of what risks were associated with this project. The Tewkesbury Garden Town Programme Manager shared these concerns but advised that the initiative was being led by the County Council so it was necessary to work within its processes and systems and the requirements of National Highways and the Department for Transport etc. She understood that things had gone back to the drawing board which was why the consultation had been pushed back by six to eight months. The Member asked for a view on what would be the best for Tewkesbury and the Tewkesbury Garden Town Programme Manager indicated that, when the transport modelling was undertaken, it would be important to be clear what the Garden Town and Tewkesbury Borough Council would like to see delivered through that in order to be able to inform the process rather than react to it – this would also form part of the evidence base for the Joint Strategic Plan. The Head of Development Services explained that, without any upgrade or changes to the J9/A46, there was an issue with capacity to accommodate growth in that location – whilst the quantum of development could go forward without the highways infrastructure in place, it would be necessary to work with colleagues to understand the timescale for J9 coming forward otherwise the ability to deliver growth in the borough would be seriously curtailed. In terms of the Joint Strategic Plan, it was necessary to demonstrate that sites could come forward and Officers were working with Gloucestershire County Council to understand the thinking of the outline business case and development consent order for the particular project as well as looking at alternative options, although she did not know what those would be. The County Council was looking to consult sometime next year but the timeline had not been confirmed. There was a big risk to the Garden Town going forward without that certainty. The Chair indicated that he understood the consultation had been delayed to allow more detailed work on various route options.
- 24.5 In response to a query regarding Page No. 47, Ref. 15 Waste Transfer Station at Wingmoor Farm, and whether there was any indication as to when the second planning application would be determined by the County Council, the Head of Corporate Services undertook to find out and advise Members following the meeting. A Member indicated that, in terms of corporate risk, there seemed to be a problem with the planning function in relation to the capacity of the department and the ability to attract a sufficient number of suitably qualified staff so he was surprised

this was not referenced within the corporate risk register and asked if there would be a business impact on the authority if it failed to deliver a reasonable service. The Head of Development Services indicated that recruitment and retention was an issue for a number of sectors within the Council; in terms of Planning, it was being managed within the organisation and contractors were appointed to support the department. The Member explained that his concern was the level of interaction between the Planning department and the public – whilst the public would not necessarily feel the impact of a lack of staff in an internal facing service such as IT, Planning was front and centre in terms of outward facing services. The Head of Development Services undertook to discuss with Management Team whether there was a need to include this as a corporate risk. Another Member expressed the view that staff shortages was a topic that most businesses would consider to be a significant risk. She felt that lack of qualified staff put a major strain on the Council's ability to perform. The Head of Corporate Services agreed this needed to be discussed by Management Team to establish whether there was merit in including it as a corporate risk based on the profile of the Planning service and to give the Committee assurance the Development Management Review was effective at managing the risk.

24.6 With regard to Page No. 42, Ref. 11 Non-delivery of Ashchurch Bridge project, a Member asked if there was a date for the appeal and noted that the original budget was approximately £8m but asked how much it was now and whether the government would pay. The Corporate Director advised that the appeal would be on either 13 or 14 December but the precise date would not be confirmed until a day or two before. In terms of the cost of the project, a recent report to the Executive Committee had suggested it would be in the region of £12m. The Tewkesbury Garden Town Programme Manager advised that it was hoped the project would come in at around £10m but it was hard to be precise until the market was tested. She confirmed that Officers were in conversation with Homes England regarding the additional cost but conversations were also taking place with regard to other potential sources of funding. In response to a query as to what happened if the Parish Council won the appeal, the Corporate Director advised that the planning permission would be quashed on the basis of a technical reason and the application would need to be reconsidered by the Planning Committee resulting in a delay of several months. The Member raised concern that there would be a limit to any extension Homes England might give in terms of funding and the Tewkesbury Garden Town Programme Manager advised that the national programme deadline was March 2024 so Treasury approval would be needed to work past that deadline – there were other schemes in the programme with that approval but there would need to be a significant reason and there were no guarantees.

24.7 A Member drew attention to Page No. 48, Ref. 16 Cost of Living, and asked if the government funded the difference to cover the cost of the increase in people applying for benefits, for example, if 100 people normally paid Council Tax but 60 of those were suddenly eligible for benefits so the Council's revenue was reduced as a result. The Head of Finance and Asset Management advised that the direct increase in benefit payments was generally covered by growth in Council Tax income. The Member noted there had been mention of a working group in relation to this risk and she asked if that would include Councillors. The Head of Corporate Services advised that a report had been taken to Executive Committee setting out the Council's response and a cross-service Officer group had been established and would meet monthly; to his knowledge a Member group had not been recommended.

24.8 Having considered the information provided it was

RESOLVED

1. That the risks and mitigating controls within the corporate risk register be **NOTED**.
2. That it be **AGREED** that the following risks be removed from the corporate risk register:
 - Ref. 6 – Safeguarding
 - Ref. 9 – Growth Hub
 - Ref. 12 – COVID-19 Recovery

A&G.25 MANAGEMENT ASSURANCE STATEMENTS 2021/22

25.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 52-85, which provided management assurance statements for each service area. Members were asked to consider the statements and the conclusion that, overall, for 2021/22, the management of the Council's internal control environment was satisfactory.

25.2 The Head of Corporate Services explained that, as was the case last year due to the lack of internal audit activity, management assurance statements had been provided by each Head of Service to give assurance to Members and the external auditors, when issuing their value for money opinion, that the internal control environment was still being managed despite recovering from the pandemic. There were some questions with a partial response but it would be unrealistic to expect that all of the Council's services operated 100% effectively all of the time. The assurance statements would be passed to Grant Thornton to inform the external audit opinion which would be presented to the Committee in March 2023.

25.3 With regard to the assurance statement from the Head of Development Services, a Member drew attention to Page No. 72, No. 7 which stated that the Interim Development Manager had advised that the Council had been issuing planning consents for five years but the legislation governed that it should be for three years - unless there was a specific reason for a longer period - and she asked what the impact of this was, how many applications this applied to and whether people had been notified. In response, the Head of Development Services advised that this could not be reversed once planning permission had been granted and it would require a significant amount of Officer resource to look into the number of applications this applied to; however, she confirmed that the issue had now been corrected and planning permissions were generally being issued for the standard three years. In relation to No. 6 which dealt with partnerships, a Member expressed the view that an effective governance structure was vital and it was concerning if there was no agreed governance arrangement in place in relation to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The Head of Development Services advised that there was governance in place but this was not a formalised, joint arrangement with Cheltenham Borough and Gloucester City Councils; however, all of the items in the Infrastructure Funding Statement were transport-related projects so any bids which came in had to go to the County Council. Notwithstanding this, more money was coming into the CIL pot so it recognised that it was necessary to formalise the arrangement and work was ongoing with One Legal in relation to this. The Head of Corporate Services advised that this had been identified as a Significant Governance Issue within the Annual Governance Statement which would be considered under the next Agenda Item.

25.4 It was

RESOLVED That the management assurance statements provided by each service area and the conclusion that, overall, for 2021/22, the management of the Council's internal control environment was satisfactory be **NOTED**.

A&G.26 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021/22

26.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 149-166, attached, at Appendix 1, the Council's Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 which Members were asked to approve.

26.2 The Head of Corporate Services explained that the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 - now amended by the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (amendment) Regulations 2020 - required local authorities to conduct a review, at least once a year, of the effectiveness of its systems of internal control and include a statement reporting on the review with any published Statement of Accounts. The Annual Governance Statement should normally be approved at the same time as, and certainly no later than, the Statement of Accounts. The review was undertaken by the Corporate Governance Group. The draft Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22 was attached at Appendix 1 to the report and identified eight Significant Governance Issues that required improvement, set out in the table at Pages No. 101-102, and it was noted that the first three items had been brought forward from the previous Annual Governance Statement. The Annual Government Statement had been considered by the external auditors to give assurance that it was a fair reflection of the Council's governance arrangements.

26.3 A Member drew attention to Page No. 92 of the report and the reference to the Welcome Back Fund which she felt had been a waste in terms of how the money had been spent. She understood that external companies had to set out what they wanted to do with the money but it would have been useful if they could have spoken to local Ward Members beforehand.

26.4 It was

RESOLVED That the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 be **APPROVED**.

A&G.27 ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

27.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Head of Community Services, circulated at Pages No. 105-127, which provided the annual report to give assurance that Tewkesbury Borough Council was fulfilling its safeguarding duties. Members were asked to consider the report and the Section 11 assurance submission attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

27.2 The HR and OD Manager indicated that she was presenting the report in her capacity as the Deputy Safeguarding Officer and explained that, along with the report was the annual assessment which was submitted to the Assurance Panel at Gloucestershire County Council. She advised there was an error at Page No. 111 of the submission in the response to standard 1 question 3 as the Whistleblowing Policy had been agreed by the Executive Committee on 5 February 2020 not 12 October 2016 as stated. It was noted that Members had previously asked for an indication of the type of safeguarding issues that were raised and a sample of redacted cases had been attached at Appendix 2 to the report. The report indicated that a new element of safeguarding had arisen for the Council this year in relation to migrants and asylum seekers and the Homes for Ukraine scheme had been a particular consideration for the authority.

- 27.3 Paragraph 1.6 of the report stated that the Head of Community Services would attend the Assurance Panel in November 2022 to undergo further scrutiny of the Section 11 Statement and the HR and OD Manager advised that she had attended the Panel a couple of weeks ago. It was always difficult for the Panel to understand the content of the statement in relation to a district council, particularly in terms of contact with children, but the meeting had generally gone well and Officers were always open to suggestions for improvements so she would be interested to receive the Panel's feedback.
- 27.4 A Member drew attention to Page No. 123 of the report, and the organisation's response to standard 3 question 5, which stated that the countywide Whistleblowing Policy needed to be reviewed and she asked when this would be carried out. The HR and OD Manager advised that the policy would be due for review in February 2023. Another Member asked if this was overdue and was informed this was in line with normal procedure to review policies every three years unless there was legislative or regulatory change which meant that it needed to be done sooner. The Member noted from Page No. 113 of the report that safeguarding refresher training needed to be carried out across the organisation and she asked when that would take place. The HR and OD Manager advised that the Council used modules provided by Gloucestershire County Council and she would be looking at a plan to roll out the training.
- 27.5 A Member pointed out that a lot of acronyms were used in Appendix 2 so it would have been helpful for these to be written in full or for a glossary to be included. She was grateful for the examples and indicated that it would be nice to have an update on the cases at some point. In terms of the case study at Appendix 3 to the report, the Member congratulated Officers on the outcomes and asked for clarification on the Guinness Partnership. The HR and OD Manager advised that it was a housing partnership and, in terms of the examples in Appendix 2, the outcomes would be around passing on information or working with someone so Officers would not necessarily be aware of the end result.
- 27.6 It was
RESOLVED That the annual safeguarding update and the Section 11 assurance submission, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be **NOTED**.

A&G.28 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN MONITORING REPORT

- 28.1 The report of the Chief Audit Executive (Head of Corporate Services) provided an overview of the internal audit work completed during the period. Members were asked to consider the work undertaken and the assurance given on the adequacy of the internal controls operating in the systems audited.
- 28.2 The Head of Corporate Services confirmed that internal audit was now operational and audits in relation to cemeteries, car parks and the arrangements for managing the GDPR risk were well underway with a view to bringing those opinions to the meeting in December. In terms of the audit opinions before Members today, it was noted that the transformation of the bulky waste service had been extremely successful - the service had gone from being in deficit to generating a surplus with waiting times reduced from 6/7 weeks to one week and the introduction of an online booking system. Whilst there had been found to be a reasonable level of control, the first recommendation was around changing the parameters within the online system that had been built within Liberty Create to ensure that personal data was only being held for an appropriate amount of time and a deadline of January 2023 had been set in relation to that. The second recommendation was in relation to monthly meetings with the Council's contractor to reflect good practice and ensure there was an audit trail for decisions as well as picking up on things recommended

in the audit, for example, the current contract only contained one Key Performance Indicator (KPI) around recycling so consideration should be given to introducing others, for instance, customer wait times. The audit had found that bulky waste charges were all being approved in accordance with Council policy. In terms of fees, there had been a glitch whereby a small number of customers were charged less for the service than they should have been and a fix was identified to resolve the issue before Christmas. It was noted that customers in receipt of benefits were entitled to a 50% reduction in charge but the audit had identified a couple of occasions where the claim number did not relate to the current claim at the time of booking, therefore, it had been recommended that Customer Services check the benefit system to ensure the customer was receiving benefits at the time of booking. It had also been recommended that sample checks of refunds be undertaken by the Customer Services Team Leader and that more information be placed on the Council's website so customers were aware that refunds would only be given up to 48 hours prior to their scheduled collection. A limited opinion had been issued in relation to invoices not being reflective of the services delivered as a review of invoices had highlighted an increase in charges from February 2022; it was recommended that these should be formalised by agreeing a variation to the contract. Furthermore, this had highlighted that invoices submitted to the Council were not really checked by the team for accuracy so it was also recommended that all bulky waste invoices be verified prior to payment.

- 28.3 A Member indicated that the new service had been running for 18 months so there was bound to be some learning from it and he congratulated the teams involved on providing a better quality of service to residents. Another Member echoed those sentiments but raised concern that the KPI was for 'percentage of items recycled: up to 70%' which she found very woolly as this could mean only 1% were actually being recycled. In terms of the recommendation at Page No. 135 in relation to information being added to the webpage by December 2023, she asked why this would take so long. In response, the Principal Trade Waste Officer advised that a meeting was arranged with the Business Transformation and Customer Services Teams for tomorrow and she was confident that there was nothing in the recommendations which could not be implemented quickly.
- 28.4 With regard to the audit of the E-Ploy system, the Head of Corporate Services advised that recruitment had previously been a paper-based process but applicants could now be tracked on a dashboard and the HR Team did not have to print off application forms etc. This had been a fundamental change in the way the organisation was able to recruit. The audit had found the majority of processes to be sound and there was a clear audit trail for each stage of the process. One recommendation had been made around the retention of HR files. The HR and OD Manager indicated that it was good to have a positive audit result and one of the things that had been looked for when procuring the system was the ability to have checks and balances in place so she was happy to see that working. The third audit was around treasury management and it was noted that, as at 31 August 2022, the Council had £33.8m of investments and £30.8m of borrowing. The Treasury Management Strategy had been found to be appropriate for the investment and borrowing activities and was reviewed on a regular basis; the investment ledger and general ledger were reconciled on a monthly basis; and investments had been placed with justification, supported with appropriate documentation and only made with approved investment counterparties within time and financial sector limits. Two recommendations had been made around treasury management records and version control on documents to ensure that the Treasury Management Policy was reviewed on an annual basis.

28.5 It was

RESOLVED That the internal audit monitoring report be **NOTED**.

A&G.29 INTERNAL AUDIT SIX MONTH PLAN 2022/23

- 29.1 The report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 146-153, set out the proposed Internal Audit Plan for October 2022 to March 2023. Members were asked to approve the six month plan as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.
- 29.2 The Head of Corporate Services indicated this was a six month plan covering the period October 2022 to March 2023 and he explained that, when the next internal audit plan was presented to the Audit and Governance Committee in March 2023, it was intended that would be a truly risk-based plan as a number of things had changed since the pandemic. This would involve working though all of the Council's activities and identifying auditable areas. In the interim, the six month plan had been discussed with Heads of Service and the items identified all had a risk impact. The plan included: the risk register, to ensure all actions were properly managed; complaints, following a request from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure that lessons learnt were being implemented; payroll, given the amount of transactions over the last 12-24 months and the general turnover of staff as well as the pay award etc; and grants, to ensure there was a proper spending plan in place. In addition, there were a number of service-related audits within HR relating to the new absence management process which would be in place by the end of December and the modernisation of the service in terms of timesheet recording and administration of annual leave etc. There would also be audits around Council Tax discounts and exemptions and recovery as well as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and ICT.
- 29.3 A Member was pleased to see that a number of days had been requested for an internal audit to review the grant schemes as there had been so many new schemes in recent years and another Member welcomed the CIL audit as it was important for communities that this was working correctly moving forward. It was

RESOLVED That the Internal Audit Six Month Plan 2022/23 be **NOTED**.

A&G.30 INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER

- 30.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Chief Audit Executive (Head of Corporate Services), circulated at Pages No. 154-167 which attached, at Appendix 1, the revised Internal Audit Charter. Members were asked to approve the Internal Audit Charter.
- 30.2 Members were advised that it was a requirement of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) that internal audit activity must be formally defined in an Internal Audit Charter. A number of minor amendments were proposed as set out at Page No. 155, Paragraph 3.1 of the report, and were largely textual changes.
- 30.3 A Member asked what the substance of the change was in relation to the relationship with external audit and was informed that two paragraphs had been removed from Page No. 165 and replaced with the paragraph at the top of Page No. 166. The Head of Corporate Services explained that there had previously been a joint working agreement in place with the Audit Commission; however, Grant Thornton was more independent from internal audit so the charter had been updated to reflect that.
- 30.4 It was

RESOLVED That the Internal Audit Charter be **APPROVED**.