

Brighton & Hove City Council

Audit & Standards Committee

4.00pm 18 April 2023

Council Chamber, Brighton Town Hall

Minutes

Present: Councillor Wilkinson (Chair) Hugh-Jones (Group Spokesperson), Littman, Meadows, Simson, West and Yates

Independent Persons present: Helen Aston, David Gill

Part One

43 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

43a Declarations of substitutes

43.1 Councillor Littman was present as substitute for Councillor Shanks.

43b Declarations of interests

43.2 There were none.

43c Exclusion of the press and public

43.3 In accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Committee considered whether the public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any item of business on the grounds that it is likely in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during it, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act.

43.4 **Resolved** - That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting.

44 MINUTES

44.1 **Resolved** – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 January 2023 be approved as the correct record.

45 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

45.1 The Chair provided the following communications:

“Today is Helen Aston’s last Audit & Standards Committee meeting. So I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge that and to thank her for her very considerable contribution to this Committee, and to the Council generally, over the last 4 years of her tenure.

The role of Independent Person is a challenging one, which requires a wide-ranging skillset. The Council’s Independent Person’s need to have a clear understanding of the member complaints regime and to be confident when giving a steer to the Monitoring Officer at key points in the process. That steer needs to be clear and pragmatic: sensitive to the nuances of the context and aware of the challenges cllrs are under while being sure to cut through to the key issues raised by complainants. I am informed that Helen’s contribution in relation to complaints has been consistently reliable and clear and that she has been very helpful in the project of reviewing complaints in a fair and even-handed way.

We are lucky here to consistently attract Independent Person’s who are of a very high calibre, notwithstanding the significant time commitment the role entails. The professional skillset Helen has brought to this role has been equally useful in enabling her to apply an educated perspective to the Council’s approach to discharging the core audit functions of this Committee. She has consistently used the understanding she’s acquired in her professional job to review and gently challenge established approaches in the areas reported to the Committee. Her comments have been consistently well-informed, clear and practical. I’m sure that I speak on behalf of all Groups when I wish her well and thank her for her contribution”.

46 CALL OVER

46.1 All items on the agenda were reserved for discussion.

47 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

No public representations were received.

48 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

No items from Members were received.

49 INTERNAL AUDIT AND COUNTER FRAUD QUARTER 3 PROGRESS REPORT 2022/23

49.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Governance, People & Resources that provided Members with an update on all internal audit and counter fraud activity completed during quarter 3 (2022/23), including a summary of all key audit findings. The report also included an update on the performance of the Internal Audit Service during the period.

49.2 Councillors West, Meadows, Hugh-Jones and Yates asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

49.3 Resolved-

1) That the Committee note the report.

50 INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN 2023-24

- 50.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Governance, People & Resources that provided Members with the Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Audit Plan for 2023/24.
- 50.2 Councillors Meadows, Simson, West, Yates and Littman asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.
- 50.3 **Resolved-**
- 1) That the Committee approves the Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Audit Plan for 2023/24 and notes the Internal Audit Charter.

51 ANNUAL SURVEILLANCE REPORT 2022

- 51.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Governance, People & Resources that appraised the Committee of the activities undertaken utilising the Council's statutory powers to conduct covert surveillance under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) since the last report to Committee in April 2022. The report also introduces an updated Policy and Guidance document for Committee to approve.
- 51.2 David Gill asked questions of the officer during consideration of the item.
- 51.3 **Resolved-**
- 1) That Committee approves the continued use of covert surveillance as an enforcement tool to prevent and detect crime and disorder investigated by its officers, providing the activity is in line with the Council's Policy and Guidance and the necessity and proportionality rules are stringently applied.
 - 2) That Committee notes the surveillance activity undertaken by the authority since the report to Committee in April 2022 as set out in paragraph 3.3
 - 3) That Committee approves the continued use of the Policy and Guidance document as set out in Appendix 1 in its amended form.

52 STANDARDS UPDATE

- 52.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Governance, People & Resources that provided an update on Standards-related matters, including regarding complaints received in alleging that Members have breached the Code of Conduct for Members.
- 52.2 Councillors Littman, West, Meadows, Simson and Yates asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.
- 52.3 **Resolved-**

- 1) That the Committee notes the report.

53 ITEMS REFERRED FOR COUNCIL

- 51.1 No items were referred to Full Council for information.

54 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- 51.1 No items were requested for the next meeting.

The meeting concluded at 5.30pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of