

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
AUDIT, STANDARDS & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

4.00pm 22 APRIL 2025

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor West (Chair) Guilmant (Group Spokesperson), Baghoth, Gauge, Mackey and Meadows

PART ONE

42 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

42a Declarations of substitutes

42.1 There were none.

42b Declarations of interests

42.2 There were none.

42c Exclusion of the press and public

42.3 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.

42.4 **RESOLVED** - That the public not be excluded from the meeting.

43 MINUTES

43.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 January 2025 be approved and signed as the correct record.

44 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

44.1 The Chair provided the following communications:

I'd like to welcome everyone here to our last committee meeting of the municipal year. In addition to our regular Internal Audit and Counter Fraud and our Standards Update, we have the annual audit plan to consider and approve, and also a new disciplinary

policy and an updated whistleblower policy to approve. So not just matters to note today, although those are always important for us to consider.

I was going to say welcome to John Hooton, who I thought would be here. But I don't see John so that's not needed.

As members will recall we received the External Auditors annual report on the council's value for money at our January meeting. I'm keen that we consider progress with implementation of the council's budget and VFM work at our June meeting. John has agreed this would be good timing as our external auditors will be carrying out their VFM work this May, when they look at financial sustainability, and officers will be able to feed into this and auditors should be able to report back in June with some interim findings and our meeting isn't until the back end of June. So hopefully that will be possible and I think that it will be useful to hear how progress is going. I'm pleased to say Councillor Taylor will be able to join us at that meeting to help support our discussion of this and answer any questions that we may have about how that's going and other matters that are covered by his cabinet agreement. So, I hope members will be agreeable to us including that as an additional item at the next meeting and I think formally we actually have to include that as something suggested at item 54 of on our today.

I'm sure many members will have contributed to the LGA peer review. Councillor Guilmant has shared with me some very well-made points that he raised with the review regarding the presentation of information in committee agendas and committee member development. Both of which I agree need to be strengthened and we're planning to meet with officers to discuss these suggestions along with the LGA review feedback and we've had a chance to look at that. But if other members have got any relevant points to our committee work that they have raised with the LGA that they wish to feed in, then we can consider these in the mix as well.

45 CALL OVER

- 45.1 The Democratic Services Officer called the agenda items to the committee. All items were reserved for discussion.

46 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- 46.1 No public representations were received.

47 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

- 47.1 No member representations were received.

48 INTERNAL AUDIT AND COUNTER FRAUD QUARTER 3 PROGRESS REPORT 2024-25

- 48.1 The committee considered the report Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Quarter 3 Progress Report to provide Members with an update on all internal audit and counter fraud activity, including a summary of all key audit findings. The report also includes an update on the performance of the Internal Audit Service during the period.

48.2 Councillors Gauge, Guilmant, Meadows, and West asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

48.3 **RESOLVED –**

That the Audit, Standards, and General Purposes Committee note the report.

49 INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN 2025-26

49.1 The committee considered the report of the Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26.

49.2 Councillors Gauge, Guilmant, Mackey, and West asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

49.3 **RESOLVED –**

That the Audit, Standards, and General Purposes Committee approve the Internal Audit Strategy and Internal Audit Plan, and notes the Internal Audit Charter.

50 NEW DISCIPLINARY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

50.1 The committee considered the new Disciplinary Policy Procedure following a recent review.

50.2 Councillors Baghoth, Gauge, Guilmant, Meadows, and West asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

50.3 **RESOLVED –**

That the Audit, Standards, and General Purposes Committee:

- 1) Approve the new policy and procedure and for it to be implemented on or after 1 May 2025.
- 2) Authorise the Interim Director People and Innovation to take the necessary steps to implement and publish the new policy and procedure including determining any transition arrangements.

51 UPDATED WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

51.1 The committee considered the updated Whistleblowing Policy report to set out the process and data relating to whistleblowing complaints for information.

51.2 Councillors Gauge, Guilmant, Mackey, and West asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

51.3 **RESOLVED –**

That the Audit, Standards, and General Purposes Committee:

- 1) Note the information in this report and agrees to receive an annual report on the Whistleblowing Policy, process and themes.
- 2) Approves the updated Whistleblowing Policy as detailed in Appendix 1.
- 3) Authorise the Council's Monitoring Officer to publish the updated Whistleblowing Policy on the Council's intranet and website, and to make any changes they consider to be necessary or incidental to ensure consistency with the Council's other complaints-related arrangements.

52 STANDARDS UPDATE

- 52.1 The committee considered the Standards Update report, providing Members an update on complaints alleging that Members have breached the Council's Code of Conduct for Members and on related matters.
- 52.2 Councillors Guilmant, Meadows, and West asked questions and contributed to the debate of the report.

52.3 RESOLVED –

That the Audit, Standards, and General Purposes Committee note the report.

53 ITEMS REFERRED FOR COUNCIL

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

54 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- 54.1 Further information was requested on the budget implementation of VFM.

The meeting concluded at 6.04pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of