

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE MEETING

Town Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HS

Tuesday, 21 January 2025 - 2.00 pm

PRESENT Councillor P Hackett (Chair)

Councillors J Gubb, S Andrews, S Gibson and P Hames

ALSO PRESENT G Bryant - Finance Manager (S151 Officer)
A Fay - Service Improvement Officer
S Dorey - Head of Legal & Governance (& Monitoring Officer)
K Hewlett - Electoral and Democratic Services Officer
L Glover - Corporate Support Officer
S May - Corporate Support Officer

171. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Brenton.

172. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 24th September 2024 were presented.

Councillor S Gibson entered at 2.02pm.

It was proposed by Councillor P Hackett, seconded by Councillor J Gubb and –

Resolved:

That the minutes be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(Vote: For – 4, Against – 0, Abstentions - 1)

173. ACTION LIST

There were no outstanding actions.

174. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

175. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

It was proposed by Councillor P Hackett, seconded by Councillor J Gubb and –

Resolved:

That the Agenda, as published, be agreed.

(Vote: For – Unanimous).

176. URGENT MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR

There were no urgent matters brought forward.

177. FORWARD PLAN

Members noted the Forward Plan.

178. CODE OF GOVERNANCE

The Service Improvement Officer presented the report, the purpose of which was for the Council to carry out an annual review it's Corporate Governance arrangements.

The Committee were informed that the Annual Governance Statement will be presented at the next meeting on the 1st April 2025. Moreover, Members noted that there have been no amendments to the Code of Governance.

It was proposed by Councillor P Hackett, seconded by Councillor S Andrews and –

Resolved:

That the reviewed Code of Governance be approved.

(Vote: For – Unanimous).

179. AMENDMENT OF CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES - PROCUREMENT THRESHOLDS

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was to advise Members on the re-write of the current Contract Procedure Rules including the amendment of the procurement internal thresholds values to facilitate the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) explained that new legislation has caused substantial changes to the Contract Procedure Rules. The changes will embed transparency throughout the commercial lifecycle and open up public procurement to new entrants such as small business and social enterprise. Members acknowledged that the fundamental principles of the rules will remain the same, but

that there will be alterations to the extent and detail of information made publicly available. These amendments will be presented to Full Council towards the end of February.

Members questioned if the social value threshold, with reference to environmental aspects, could be increased from 10%. The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) discussed the potential for flexibility, and advised that the new legislation will open markets to new suppliers. Nonetheless, the Finance Manager (S151 Officer) confirmed that the Social Value Policy could be re-evaluated.

In response, Members enquired about the procedure for submitting a proposal on this matter. It was agreed that Democratic Services would record this as an Action to be reported back to the Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor P Hackett, seconded by Councillor J Gubb and –

Resolved:

That Members approve the revised revisions to the Contract Procedure Rules detailed in the Report.

(Vote: For – 4, Against – 0, Abstention – 1).

180. CORPORATE RISK

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) gave a brief update on the Corporate risk, with reference to Devolution and the White Paper.

The Committee noted the report, and briefly discussed Unitary Risk.

181. INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE REPORT

Brad Hutton, the Senior Assurance Manager at the Devon Assurance Partnership presented the report, the purpose of which was to provide a summary of the performance against the Internal Assurance plan to date for the 2024/25 financial year, highlighting the key areas of work undertaken and summarising the main findings and recommendations aimed at improving controls where work has been finalised.

The Senior Assurance Manager confirmed that three audits have been completed since the last update in September 2024: Creditors, Safeguarding and VAT. Members were advised of some follow-up work that had taken place on a 2023/24 audit on Conservation.

Audits completed since the last Committee:

Creditors	Substantial Assurance
VAT	Substantial Assurance
Safeguarding	Reasonable Assurance

Moreover, the Committee noted that audits on ICT/Cyber Security, Income, Main Accounting System, Harbour/Port Marine Safety, Building Control Services and Cemeteries have commenced.

Members were directed to Pages 4 and 5 of the report, which provided detail on the High Level Summary Plan and the High Level Summary Audit Plan Outcomes.

The Committee acknowledged that the Senior Assurance Manager would set out a comprehensive plan for the next financial year at the meeting on the 1st April 2025. The plan will consider high risk areas and the core functions of the Council. The Committee will have the opportunity to feed into the plan.

In response to an enquiry regarding the conservation work, the Senior Assurance Manager clarified that this referred to buildings and assets.

Overall, Members noted the update.

182. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor P Hackett, seconded by Councillor J Gubb and –

Resolved:

That the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of exempt information by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part I and paragraph 10 of Part 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

(Vote: For – Unanimous)

183. PART II (CLOSED SESSION)

184. PART II - CORPORATE RISK

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) provided an update for Members to note.

It was proposed by Councillor P Hackett, seconded by Councillor J Gubb and –

Resolved:

That the meeting come out of Part II and close.

(Vote: For – Unanimous).

The meeting commenced at 2.01 pm and closed at 2.23 pm

Chair:

Date: