

EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY (AUDIT AND VALUE FOR MONEY COUNCIL SERVICES) COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee held in the Main Hall, Town Hall on 18th November 2021 at 6.30pm.

Present:

Councillors A. Clarke (Chairman), A. A. Chaudhry, D. F. Fletcher, S. Gaskin, Mrs V. J. Gould, R. G. Grosvenor, T. Hadley, P. Hudson, S. McGarry, C. Sylvester, Mrs L. Walker and C. Whittaker.

Officers Present:

Sal Khan (Head of Service), Lisa Turner (Chief Accountant), James Abbott (Corporate and Commercial Manager) and Monica Henchcliffe (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

Apologies for absence was received from Councillors L. Beech, Mrs B. Brady and M. Fitzpatrick.

231/21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest at the commencement of the meeting

232/21 **MINUTES**

Resolved:

That the Public Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee held on 23rd September 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor A Clarke		Councillor D F Fletcher
Councillor A A Chaudhry		Councillor T Hadley
Councillor S Gaskin		Councillor C Sylvester
Councillor V J Gould		Councillor C Whittaker
Councillor R Grosvenor		
Councillor P Hudson		
Councillor S McGarry		
Councillor Mrs L Walker		

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit (Statement of Accounts) Committee held on 23rd September 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor A Clarke		Councillor D F Fletcher
Councillor A A Chaudhry		Councillor T Hadley
Councillor D F Fletcher		Councillor C Sylvester
Councillor S Gaskin		Councillor C Whittaker
Councillor Mrs V J Gould		
Councillor R Grosvenor		
Councillor P Hudson		
Councillor S McGarry		
Councillor Mrs L Walker		

233/21 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business submitted to the meeting pursuant to Rule 12.

234/21 **MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT**

To comply with the Treasury Management Code of Practice, the Chief Accountant presented the Mid-Year Treasury Management Report to Members. It provided an update against the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, setting out current investment and borrowing portfolios and outlining any other treasury related matters.

An opportunity for questions followed.

Resolved:

That Members noted the Mid-Year Treasury Management Report and did not make any comments or observations to full Council.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor A A Chaudhry	Councillor R Grosvenor	Councillor Mrs L Walker
Councillor A Clarke	Councillor T Hadley	
Councillor D F Fletcher		
Councillor S Gaskin		
Councillor V J Gould		
Councillor P Hudson		
Councillor S McGarry		
Councillor C Sylvester		
Councillor C Whittaker		

NOTED

235/21 NATIONAL SCHEME FOR EXTERNAL AUDITOR APPOINTMENTS FOR THE 5 YEAR PERIOD FROM 2023/24

Members received an update from the Chief Accountant outlining proposals for appointing the external auditor to the Council for the accounts for the five year period from 2023 to 2024.

The current contract for external audit which was led through the national scheme coordinated by public sector appointment which is due to expire in March 2023. Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSSA) are now undertaking a procurement exercise for the next appointing period, covering audits for 2023/24 to 2027/28. Local authorities have the option to arrange their own procurement and make the appointment themselves or in conjunction with other bodies, or to join and take advantage of the national scheme administered by the PSAA.

The Council is required to appoint an auditor to audit its account for each financial year, and the Chief Accountant outlined the three options available to the Council:

1. To appoint its own auditor, which requires it to follow the procedure set out in the act;
2. To act jointly with other authorities to procure an auditor following the procedures in the Act; or
3. To opt in to the national auditor appointment scheme administered by a body designated by the Secretary of State as the 'appointing person'. The body currently designated for this role is Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSSA).

In order to opt in to the national scheme, the Council must make a decision at a meeting of Full Council by 11th March 2022, with the contracts being awarded in August 2022.

An opportunity for questions followed.

Councillor Chaudhry showed concerns about joining the national scheme without knowing the cost and information of the other options, and how would Members know they were making the right decision.

The Chief Accountant informed Members that it would be very burdensome for the Council to carry out their own procurement exercise, and the national approach would be the most viable option.

Resolved:

To recommend that the Council accepts Public Sector Audit Appointments' invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government and police bodies for five financial years from 1 April 2023.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor A Clarke	Councillor A A Chaudhry	
Councillor D F Fletcher	Councillor T Hadley	
Councillor S Gaskin	Councillor Mrs L Walker	
Councillor Mrs V J Gould		

Councillor R Grosvenor		
Councillor P Hudson		
Councillor S McGarry		
Councillor C Sylvester		
Councillor C Whittaker		

236/21 **SCRUTINY REVIEW UPDATE**

The Corporate and Commercial Manager gave a brief update on the ongoing reviews on the Scrutiny Work Programme.

He reported that:

1. Waste Management – He reported that the review will be finalised in the next few days and would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee in December. The sub-group was also working with the other Scrutiny Committee, which is close to completion, to confirm their timeline so that both reviews could be reported in a coordinated and aligned manner.
2. Mayoralty – A well progressed working draft has been sent to the sub-group for any comments. The sub group are also analysing a short benchmarking exercise that had been undertaken earlier.
3. Disabled Facilities Grants – This review was in the infancy stage at present. The sub-group met last week to review the scoping paper following change of membership. A meeting is scheduled to take place soon with the sup-group and the relevant technical officer.
4. ICT Infrastructure – This review as also in the infancy stage at present. The scoping paper has been prepared and the sub-group are considering the next step.

Chairman requested that Members gave consideration any topics to be reviewed in the future, to be mailed to himself or to the Democratic Services Officer, in order for a programme of ongoing and future reviews to be collated.

NOTED

237/21 **PUBLIC EXECUTIVE DECISION RECORDS**

Members considered the Public Executive Decision Records.

An opportunity for questions followed.

NOTED

238/21 **QUESTIONS**

There were no questions submitted to the Committee prior to the meeting.

The response of the supplementary question from Councillor R Grosvenor was tabled at the meeting.

239/21 **DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

Resolved:

That the next meeting take place on Thursday 16th December 2021 at 6.30pm.

240/20 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved:

That, in accordance with Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the Meeting during discussion of the following items as it would likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets before each item number on the Agenda:

PRIVATE MINUTES

PRIVATE EXECUTIVE DECISION RECORDS

Chairman