

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 Coltman VC Room, Town Hall on 16th December 2021 at 6.30pm.

Present:

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

Officers Present:

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

Also Present:

Mrs S. Jassel and Mr M. Green – External Auditors (Grant Thornton)

An apology for absence was received from Councillors Mrs L. Walker.

243/21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

244/21 **MINUTES**

Resolved:

That the Public Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny (Audit and Value for Money Council Services) Committee held on 18th November 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 R Lock
Councillor D F Fletcher		
Councillor S Gaskin		
Councillor V J Gould		
Councillor R Grosvenor		
Councillor T Hadley		
Councillor P Hudson		
Councillor C Sylvester		

245/21 **URGENT BUSINESS**

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

246/21 **EXTERNAL AUDITORS ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

(Grant Thornton) The representative from Grant Thornton updated the Committee on their progress in delivering their responsibilities as the Council's external auditors. This included the requirement to issue a planned fee letter, their accounts audit plan, interim accounts audit, final account audit, their value for money conclusion, the annual audit letter and the certification of housing benefits claim year ended 31st March 2021.

An opportunity for questions followed.

NOTED

247/21 **INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT**

(CW Audit) The Internal Auditor gave a report summary of the work of internal audit, outlining the progress against the audit plan, the key findings and conclusions arising from their work, details of planned work and to update the Committee on the progress made in implementing previously agreed recommendations.

An opportunity for questions followed.

NOTED

248/21 **REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT – QUARTER 2**

Members considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer in accordance with the Council's financial regulations, presenting the forecast outturn position in relation to the Council's revenue budget, capital programme of expenditure and treasury management activities.

The Chief Accountant gave a short presentation on the second quarterly report in the annual cycle of financial monitoring for the financial year 2020/2021.

An opportunity for questions followed.

NOTED

249/21 **QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 2**

The Report of Sal Khan, Head of Service, regarding the Quarter 2 Performance was considered. The Corporate and Commercial Manager provided an overview of the report to the committee.

An opportunity for questions followed.

NOTED

250/21 WASTE MANAGEMENT REVIEW REPORT

The final report of the review of the waste management was circulated with the agenda for Members consideration. The purpose was to review the value for money in the delivery of the Council's waste management function and associated strategic approaches to ensure effective waste collection, disposal and recycling.

The activities carried out in order to complete the review included desktop studies, benchmarking with partners and discussion with the relevant Council officers, along with several other topics were considered.

The Sub-group concluded that the financial figures highlighted that the Council was significantly more expensive than the statistical neighbours with the lowest costs. Additionally the figures suggested that Council was also a higher cost than other councils that delivered the service in-house and do not charge for green waste. This indicated that the Council were a relatively high cost service, which should be explored further.

One of the key challenges continued to be the correct use of the recycling bins in terms of the right items being placed into the containers, which leads to contamination costs to the Council. This should continue to be addressed through education campaigns on those issues.

The review also suggested that the Council had a good understanding of the service and the key decisions that needed to be taken. These key decisions should address the high cost of the current service.

The following recommendation was put forward for Members consideration:

1. To analyse why other statistically similar authorities appear to have lower service delivery cost; and
2. To investigate alternative delivery mechanisms for the service and charging regimes for elements of the current provision such as charging for green waste.
3. It was also agreed that the final report from the Scrutiny (Community, Regeneration, Environment and Health) that will be finalised at the January 2022 meeting, the two report would be put together and take to Cabinet for their consideration.

Resolved:

Members agreed to accept the recommendations and that the report be submitted to the next meeting of Cabinet along with the other review from the other scrutiny committee.

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 R Lock
Councillor S Gaskin	Councillor R G Grosvenor	
Councillor V J Gould	Councillor T Hadley	
Councillor P Hudson		
Councillor C Sylvester		

251/21 **SCRUTINY REVIEW PROGRESS REPORT**

The Sub-group chairs gave a brief update on the ongoing reviews on the Scrutiny Work Programme.

It was reported that:

1. Mayoralty – it was reported that the sub-group had a meeting earlier and looked at a report that had been drafted, but more work was needed to be done. A number of aspects will be looked at including travel and a survey to be circulated to Members for their consideration.
2. Disabled Facilities Grants – members of the sub-group had met with Rachel Liddle (Environmental Health Manager) to discuss DFG's. Councillor S McGarry requested that the sub-group could meet again in 6 months' time to see if any progress could be made to the report. It was agreed that the sub-group would invite a representative from Trent and Dove Housing to a meeting of the Committee regarding the disabled facilities grants and a scope on how they could work with the Council.
3. ICT Infrastructure – it was reported that a scoping paper had been agreed, and that a meeting had been planned to take place in January/February 2022 with the ICT department.

252/21 **SCRUTINY REVIEW PROGRAMME**

The Chairman requested that Members gave consideration to a topic to be reviewed next as two of the existing reviews had been completed. He suggested that the Council's Parking App was a subject that had been on the programme for review from last year.

Discussions took place and an opportunity for questions followed.

NOTED

253/21 **PUBLIC EXECUTIVE DECISION RECORDS**

Members considered the Public Executive Decision Records.

An opportunity for questions followed.

NOTED

254/21 **QUESTIONS**

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

255/21 **DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

Resolved:

That the next meeting take place on Thursday 10th February 2022 at 6.30pm.

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

LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONTRACTOR PERFORMANCE REPORT

PRIVATE EXECUTIVE DECISION RECORDS

Chairman