



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Audit Committee**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Tuesday, 10 November 2020 at 2.00 pm

Present: P O'Connor (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
T J Hennegan
J W Jones
L V Walton

Councillor(s)

P M Black
P R Hood-Williams
M B Lewis
T M White

Councillor(s)

D W Helliwell
P K Jones
S Pritchard

Officer(s)

Simon Cockings
Adam Hill
Jeremy Parkhouse
Richard Rowlands
Ben Smith
Debbie Smith

Chief Auditor
Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Resources
Democratic Services Officer
Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager
Chief Finance Officer / Section 151 Officer
Deputy Chief Legal Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillors E T Kirchner, A H Stevens and Jason Garcia (Audit Wales)

13 **Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, the following interests were declared: -

Councillor C Anderson declared a personal interest in Minute No. 15 – Mid-Year 2020/21 Overview of Risk.

14 **Minutes.**

Resolved that the Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 20 October 2020 be approved as a correct record.

15 **Mid-Year 2020/21 Overview of Risk. (For Information) (Richard Rowlands)**

Richard Rowlands, Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager presented a report which provided the Audit Committee with an overview of the status of risk in the Council during the first half of 2020/21.

It was added that Corporate risk management, monitoring and reporting was suspended in March whilst officers were otherwise engaged or impacted following

the lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the pandemic was still in progress, risk management was recovered in July, with monthly monitoring and reporting being recommenced in August.

The report provided an overview of the status of risk during the first six months of 2020/21 and looked ahead to the third quarter. Quarterly monitoring reports to Audit Committee would recommence for the third quarter when a full three months information would be available following recovery.

A copy of the Corporate Risks (22/10/20) was provided at Appendix A, an exception report was provided at Appendix B and Directorate Risks were provided at Appendix C.

The Committee discussed the following: -

- 14% return in risk reviews throughout the period and how managers were allowed to continue to review their risk area if they had the capacity;
- The large amount red actions throughout the report, the resilience of the Authority to deal with emergency matters, emergency planning throughout the organisation, particularly when the Recovery Plan takes over and improvements were expected;
- The risks concerning ICT disaster recovery, how the Pandemic had affected the workforce, particularly as a number of staff were redeployed to support Council services and how officers concentrated on mitigating any risks;
- How the focus of the Corporate Management Team had been upon the red risk areas and the improvements that were expected before the next review;
- How the Pandemic had impacted the Authority and how many services had been focussed solely on dealing with the issues arising;
- The support provided through training / monitoring / welfare for the staff who were redeployed during the period and how managers continued to monitor risks on a regular basis;
- The temporary halting of the migration of the server to a cloud based system, how Brexit had delayed progress and the risk still being categorised as an amber risk;
- How the redeployment of staff to specific areas, e.g. Finance and Social Services and the positive result of 93% of risks being reviewed despite the upheaval;
- The need for reasonableness relating to risk areas as a result of workforce pressures due to the Pandemic and the expectation of progress being reported in the next report;
- How red risk areas were to be expected given the circumstances, the reassurance provided by 93% of risks being reviewed across departments and the need to allow space to allow recovery / improvement;
- The three phases of the recovery plan and the expected timescale for recovery;
- Previously unidentified risks being highlighted, many of which were Covid 19 / workforce related, which were under the control of Directors / Departments where officers were trusted to respond accordingly;
- The Chair asked the Deputy Chief Executive to confirm if during the period where risks were managed within the service, if any significant risks had caused issues

for the Council when they were reported to CMT in August 2020. The Deputy Chief Executive stated that he did not believe so;

- The format of the report, particularly linking Council objectives to risks / controls to provide assurance;
- Ensuring the roles of the Audit Committee / Scrutiny Programme Committee are clear within the Recovery Plan going forward.

The Chair stated that prior to Covid 19 the Audit Committee had concerns regarding the robustness of the risk management process and the Committee still required assurance. It was acknowledged that Covid 19 had impacted upon progress but until the management of risk was clear to the Audit Committee, the Committee were unable to fully discharge its role.

The Deputy Chief Executive added that the Corporate Management Team wanted the same outcome and once officers were deployed and direct access provided, Councillors would be able to interrogate the system more effectively.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

16 Audit Committee Action Tracker Report. (For Information) (Jeremy Parkhouse)

The Audit Committee Action Tracker Report was provided 'for information'.

The Chair stated that further action on risk was required to provide the Committee with assurance.

17 Audit Committee Work Plan. (For Information) (Jeremy Parkhouse)

The Audit Committee Work Plan was reported 'for information'.

The Chair added that she had requested that the Chief Auditor provides an update to the December meeting on Internal Audit Annual Plan 2020/21 progress being made by the Internal Audit Team in relation to difficulties being encountered due to Covid-19.

The meeting ended at 2.51 pm

Chair