

MINUTES of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEEHeld in the Conference Room, Epping Hall on **Tuesday 27th February 2024 at 8pm.**

PRESENT: Cllr C McCredie (Chairman & Deputy Town Mayor)
Cllr G Scruton (Key Member Finance)
Cllr N Avey (Key Member Administration)

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr C Burgess (Town Mayor)
Cllr R Sharif

OFFICER: Beverley Rumsey (Town Clerk)

416 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

417 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received from members.

418 DISPENSATIONS

There were no dispensations.

419 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions or comments.

420 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Corporate Governance Advisory Committee meeting held on 24th October 2023 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

421 STATUS OF PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations of the Corporate Governance Advisory Committee (CGAC) (from their meeting on 24th October 2023) (Minutes #253–269 of 23/24) were adopted by Council at the Ordinary Council meeting on 14th November 2023 (Minute #272 of 2023/24):

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The amended Statement on Internal Control should be **APPROVED**;
- (ii) The amended Risk Management Statement should be **APPROVED**;
- (iii) The revised Employee Handbook should be **APPROVED**.

Committee **NOTED** the above information.

422 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE DOCUMENT REVIEW

Council **APPROVED** a review of policy and governance documents at the Ordinary Council meeting on 8th March 2016 (Minute #478 of 2015/16).

The list of policies for annual review and the dates for review are as follows:

Internal and External Audits: **February 2024** & October 2024

(Dealt with under agenda items 10 & 11)

Internal Audit Programme: **October 2024**

Statement on Internal Control: **October 2024**

Insurance Inventory: February 2024 **(Dealt with under agenda item 25)**

Asset Register: February 2024 **(Dealt with under agenda item 12)**

Internal Risk Register: February 2024 **(Dealt with under agenda item 9)**

Staffing Terms and Conditions: **February 2024** & October 2024 **(Dealt with under agenda item 27)**

Standing Orders & Financial Regulations: February 2024 **(Dealt with under agenda item 8)**

Employee Handbook: **October 2024**

Risk Management Statement: **October 2024**

Please note these are the current recommended review dates, but legislation may amend the dates if an earlier review is required.

Changing regulations and audit comments may add further items to this list.

The CGAC review process leads to recommendations to Council for amendments to documents to be made.

Committee **NOTED** the above information.

423 **STANDING ORDERS & FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, sch 12, para 42; Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

There have been no changes to the model Standing Orders (Attachment B) since the last review. The Town Clerk has therefore made no changes to this document **(Attachment B)**.

There have been no recommended changes to the model Financial Regulations since the last review, but the auditor has highlighted the need to review Financial Regulation 2.2 **(Attachment C)**. The Town Clerk highlighted this FR for Committee to determine the detail.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Standing Orders (with no amendments) should be **RECOMMENDED** for **ADOPTION** by Council;
- (ii) The Financial Regulations (with no general amendments) should be **RECOMMENDED** for **ADOPTION** by Council, but revision/clarification of Financial Regulation 2.2 should be **RECOMMENDED** to Council for

ADOPTION, to state that the Key Member for Finance should fulfil this role, even if they are a signatory (which they likely will be).

424 INTERNAL RISK REGISTER

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

The Town Clerk has reviewed the Internal Risk Register and made some amendments.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Internal Risk Register with those amendments should be **RECOMMENDED** for **ADOPTION** by Council.

425 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

Committee **NOTED** that the second visit of the internal auditor for the 2023/24 financial year was stated on the agenda as being on 28th February 2024. This was actually to be 7th March 2024.

The internal audit report (second interim) would be brought to Council once received.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) No further action was required at the current time.

426 EXTERNAL AUDITS

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 27th September 2022 (Minute #182 of 2022/23), Epping Town Council resolved to 'opt in' to the External Audit arrangements (which was recommended in this sector) and whereby Council would be allocated an external auditor from 2022-2027.

The external auditor for 2022-2027 for Essex will remain as PKF Littlejohn LLP.

Committee **NOTED** this information.

427 ASSET REGISTER

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

The current form of the Asset Register was **ADOPTED** following advice from Peter Lacey of NALC/SLCC and advice from the Audit Commission on 29th March 2010.

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 7th March 2023, Council RESOLVED to record individual items equal to or greater than £1000 in the Asset Register (Minute #449 (iv) of 2022/23).

PLEASE NOTE: The Asset Register records all individual items of £1000 or greater. Council have many assets whose value is less than £1000 and these are recorded in Council's inventories which are updated annually. This is standard practice.

There have been no major acquisitions and disposals during 2023/24 which is reflected in the Asset Register 2024, as per **Attachment E**.

Committee considered the following RECOMMENDATIONS and make appropriate **RECOMMENDATIONS** to Council.

- (i) Council should continue to record assets as individual items with a value equal to or greater than £1000 in the Asset Register;
- (ii) The Asset Register 2024, as per **Attachment E**, should be APPROVED as a correct record of Council's assets at this time;
- (iii) Any revisions to the draft will be presented to full Council in March.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The three RECOMMENDATIONS above would be RECOMMENDED for APPROVAL by Council.

428 **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Epping Town Council's complaints procedure was APPROVED on 7th March 2023 (Minute #449 (vi) of 2022/23) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk is pleased to report that Epping Town Council receive very few formal complaints and the office team try to deal with any issues efficiently, so they do not become a complaint. The Town Clerk has made a very minor wording amendment.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Complaints Procedure, as per **Attachment F**, would be RECOMMENDED for APPROVAL by Council.

429 **RECRUITMENT POLICY**

Committee considered the Recruitment Policy, with minor wording changes, as per **Attachment G**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Recruitment Policy with amendments, as per **Attachment G**, would be RECOMMENDED for APPROVAL by Council.

430 HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

Committee considered the Health & Safety Policy, with several amendments, as per **Attachment H**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Health & Safety Policy with several amendments (add safety to goggles) as per **Attachment H**, would be RECOMMENDED for APPROVAL by Council.

431 GRANT AWARDING POLICY

Committee considered the Grant Awarding Policy, with minor wording amendments, as per **Attachment I**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (ii) The Grant Awarding Policy with minor amendments, as per **Attachment I**, would be RECOMMENDED for APPROVAL by Council.

432 PROCUREMENT POLICY

Committee considered the Procurement Policy, with no amendments, as per **Attachment J**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Procurement Policy with no amendments, as per **Attachment J**, would be RECOMMENDED for APPROVAL by Council.

433 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT

Committee considered the Training and Development Statement, with minor amendments, as per **Attachment K**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Training and Development Statement with minor amendments, as per **Attachment K**, would be RECOMMENDED for APPROVAL by Council.

434 MARKET POLICY

Committee considered the Market Policy, with minor amendments, as per **Attachment L**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Market Policy with minor amendments, as per **Attachment L**, would be RECOMMENDED for APPROVAL by Council.

435 TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Committee considered the Tree Management Policy, with a minor wording amendment, as per **Attachment M**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Tree Management Policy, as per **Attachment M**, would be **RECOMMENDED** for **APPROVAL** by Council.

436 INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Committee considered the Investment Strategy with amendments, as per **Attachment N**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Investment Strategy would be **RECOMMENDED** for **APPROVAL** by Council, as per **Attachment N**, with the following amendments:

- Delete: of up to one year with easy access
- Delete: UK Local Authority stocks or bonds
- Town Clerk/RFO to pursue CCLA

437 BALANCE OF TRADE POLICY (MARKET)

Committee considered the Balance of Trade Policy (Market) with minor amendments, as per **Attachment O**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Balance of Trade Policy (Market) would be **RECOMMENDED** for **APPROVAL** by Council with these amendments, as per **Attachment O**.

438 CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS POLICY

Committee considered the Climate & Environmental Awareness Policy, as per **Attachment P**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Climate & Environmental Awareness Policy would be **RECOMMENDED** for **APPROVAL** by Council, as per **Attachment P**, with the following amendments:

2nd paragraph (4): Consider electric vehicles for our operations, where practical, possible and cost effective

439 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED** that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

440 INSURANCE POLICIES (CONTRACTS) & RECONCILIATION

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s111; Local Authorities (Indemnities for Members & officers) order 2004

Committee considered the forthcoming insurance information and renewal details for July 2023. The Town Clerk will prepare the necessary documentation in advance of the renewal.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and Key Member for Finance should complete the interim insurance review in advance of the July meeting (each year) and this should be **RECOMMENDED** for Council **APPROVAL**;
- (ii) The Town Clerk/RFO should get the buildings revalued (in accordance with the five year recommendation, to ensure Council are accurately insured.

441 DATA PROTECTION (GDPR) OFFICER

Statutory Basis: General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679

Committee discussed monitoring the situation regarding a Data Protection Officer.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) Council should monitor the situation regarding a Data Protection Officer and appoint one at point of need, should it be necessary, following the guidance and criteria, as per **Attachment Q**.

442 STAFF PAY SCALES & TERMS & CONDITIONS

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

(i) Pay scales

Committee **NOTED** that Epping Town Council staff are governed by the terms of conditions set by the NJC (National Joint Council) (set by NALC and SLCC). The current staff pay scales are listed as per **Attachment R**.

The pay scales which came into effect on 1st April 2023, were received in November 2023 and was backdated. It is very common for pay awards to arrive in November of the relevant financial year and when they are received after 1st April, salaries are backdated accordingly. The Town Clerk/RFO has built an increase of approximately 4% into the 2024/25 budget.

The Essex Pension Fund (which relates to all relevant staff employed with Epping Town Council prior to 2018) employer pension contribution rate from 1st April 2024 is 24.8% and this applies for 2025 (1st April 2023-1st April 2026). This was raised from 23.3%.

The employer pension contribution rate for NEST (which relates to all relevant staff employed with Epping Town Council after 2018) is currently 8% (a minimum of 3% from the employer, 5% from the employee: 4% from the employee, 1% tax relief) (from 6th April 2019 onwards). This is the rate for 2023. We have not received any alternative NEST rates for 2024 at the time of writing.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) No further action was required at the current time.
- (ii) Terms and conditions**

Committee discussed the staff terms and conditions, as per **Attachment R1**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The holiday **RECOMMENDATION** was **APPROVED** as a **RECOMMENDATION** to be made to Council for **APPROVAL**.

443 **STAFFING MATTERS**

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

Committee **CONSIDERED** the staffing update as per **Attachment S**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) No further action was required at the current time.

444 **COMPUTER SOFTWARE**

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s111

Committee **CONSIDERED** the computer information as per **Attachment T**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The computers would be cleared in accordance with any IT requirements and stored for future consideration.

445 **TOWN CLERK APPRAISAL**

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

Committee **NOTED** the Town Clerk's appraisal which was scheduled for Thursday 29th February 2024, by the Chairman of Council 2023-24, Cllr C Burgess, who is also the Chairman of the Task & Finish Personnel Committee.

The Chairman closed the meeting at **9.43pm**.

(NB: The matters on this agenda have a statutory basis under the Local Government Act 1972 in sections 101 and 111, in addition to those stated.)

Signature of Chairman

Date