

MINUTES of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Held in the Conference Room, Epping Hall on **Tuesday 21st February 2023 at 8pm.**

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr B Scruton (Town Mayor)

OFFICER: Beverley Rumsey (Town Clerk)

392 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

393 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received from members.

394 DISPENSATIONS

There were no dispensations.

395 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions or comments.

396 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Corporate Governance Advisory Committee meeting held on 1st November 2022 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

397 STATUS OF PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations of the Corporate Governance Advisory Committee (CGAC) (from their meeting on 1st November 2022) (Minutes #232–247 of 22/23) were adopted by Council at the Ordinary Council meeting on 8th November 2022 (Minute #271 of 2022/23):

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

Committee **NOTED** the above information.

398 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 2023 & October 2023**

(Dealt with under agenda items 10 & 11)

Internal Audit Programme: **October 2023**

Statement on Internal Control: **October 2023**

Insurance Inventory: February 2023 **(Dealt with under agenda item 22)**

Asset Register: February 2023 **(Dealt with under agenda item 12)**

Internal Risk Register: February 2023 **(Dealt with under agenda item 9)**

Staffing Terms and Conditions: **February 2023 & October 2023 (Dealt with under agenda item 24 & 25)**

Standing Orders & Financial Regulations: February 2023 **(Dealt with under agenda item 8)**

Employee Handbook: **October 2023**

Risk Management Statement: **October 2023**

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.

399 STANDING ORDERS & FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

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

The model Standing Orders were updated in April 2022, affecting Standing Order 18: Financial Controls and Procurement. The model change is (f). (g) and (h) no longer appear to be in the model Standing Orders and so have been crossed out. The Town Clerk would recommend that d (iv) is amended to that proposed, including the ability to tender by email. **(Attachment B)**

The model Financial Regulations have not been updated since the last review. The Town Clerk has suggested however that Financial Regulations 11 (e) and (f) are amended to permit tenders by email, to mirror the revised Standing Order above. **(Attachment C)**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The amended Standing Orders should be RECOMMENDED for ADOPTION by Council;
- (ii) The amended Financial Regulations should be RECOMMENDED for ADOPTION by Council.

400 INTERNAL RISK REGISTER

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

The Town Clerk has reviewed the Internal Risk Register and made no amendments.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The current Internal Risk Register should be recommended for ADOPTION by Council.

401 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

Committee **NOTED** that the second visit of the internal auditor for the 2022/23 financial year was on 24th January 2023.

The internal audit report (second interim) was **NOTED** by Council on 7th February 2023.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

402 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 2022-2023 and 2026-2027 for Essex will remain as PKF Littlejohn LLP.

Committee **NOTED** this information.

403 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 8th March 2022, Council RESOLVED to record individual items equal to or greater than £1000 in the Asset Register (Minute #460 (v) of 2021/22).

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 a number of acquisitions and disposals during 2022/23 which were reflected in the Asset Register 2023, 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 2023, 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.

404 **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Epping Town Council's complaints procedure was APPROVED on 8th March 2022 (Minute #460 (vi) of 2021/22) 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 no amendments to the complaints procedure, as this was revised in March 2022.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

405 **EQUALITY POLICY**

Committee considered the Equality Policy, with no amendments, as per **Attachment G**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

406 HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

Committee considered the Health & Safety Policy, with no amendments, as per **Attachment H**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Health & Safety Policy, with no amendments, as per **Attachment H**, would be RECOMMENDED for APPROVAL by Council.

407 MEDIA POLICY

Committee considered the Media Policy, with no amendments, as per **Attachment I**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (ii) The Media Policy, with no amendments, as per **Attachment I**, would be RECOMMENDED for APPROVAL by Council.

408 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Committee considered the Social Media Policy, with a minor amendment, as per **Attachment J**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Social Media Policy, with a minor amendment, as per **Attachment J**, would be RECOMMENDED for APPROVAL by Council.

409 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Committee considered the Community Engagement Policy, with amendments, as per **Attachment K**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

410 DATA PROTECTION POLICY

Committee considered the Data Protection Policy, with a minor amendment, as per **Attachment L**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Data Protection Policy, with a minor amendment, as per **Attachment L**, would be RECOMMENDED for APPROVAL by Council.

411 PUBLICATION SCHEME

Committee considered the revised Publication Scheme, as per **Attachment M**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The revised Publication Scheme, as per **Attachment M**, would be RECOMMENDED for APPROVAL by Council.

412 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.

413 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) This item be **NOTED** at the current time.

414 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, as per the Town Clerk's criteria recommendations (eg: independent, former Clerk).

415 STAFF TERMS & CONDITIONS/PAYSCALES

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

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 spine points are included as per **Attachment N**.

Staff received a review in April 2022, which arrived in November 2022 and was backdated. The Town Clerk/RFO has built an increase of approximately 4% into the 2023/24 budget. No pay award has yet been received for the 2023/24 financial year, and if received, usually comes later in the year.

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 2023 is 24.8%.

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) (from 6th April 2019 onwards). This is the current rate for 2023. We have not received any alternative NEST rates for 2023 or beyond at the time of writing. It was **RESOLVED** that:

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

416 STAFFING MATTERS

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

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

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The staffing situation/potential issues highlighted should be monitored.

417 TOWN CLERK APPRAISAL

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

Committee **NOTED** the Town Clerk's appraisal which was scheduled for Wednesday 22th February 2023, by the Chairman of Council 2022-23, Cllr B Scruton, who is also the Chairman of the Task & Finish Personnel Committee.

The Chairman closed the meeting at **9.05pm**.

(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