

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE – 19TH JUNE, 2024

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. BEHR (VICE-CHAIR IN THE CHAIR)

Councillors D. Bevan
J. P. Morgan
C. Smith
J. Wilkins

J. Absalom
M. Veale
C. Hucker

WITH: Chief Officer Resources
Chief Officer Commercial & Customer
Head of Community Services
Professional Lead – Internal Audit
Service Manager - Registration, Elections &
Corporate Complaints
Service Manager - Commercial & Business Development
Data Protection & Governance Officer
Technical Services Manager - Property Maintenance

ALSO: SRS Representative
Deputy Chief Operating Officer

AND: Audit Wales Representative
Mike Jones

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p>Councillor Tommy Smith Audit & Risk Manager Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest and dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR 2024/2025</u></p> <p>Nominations were sought for the appointment of Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee for 2024/2025.</p> <p>A Member proposed that Ms Joanne Absalom be appointed to the role, and this proposal was seconded.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Ms Joanne Absalom be appointed Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee for 2024/2025.</p> <p>Ms. Absalom took the Chair at this juncture.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The decisions of the Governance & Audit Committee held on 17th April, 2024 were submitted.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the decisions be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>ACTION SHEET</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting held on 17th April 2024 was submitted.</p>	

The Chief Officer Resources gave a brief update on the ongoing investigations. A report had been received by the Committee on one of the investigations and progress against the agreed Action Plan would be received later in the year. Consideration would also be given to Committee Members receiving a briefing note explaining the policy framework that was being used to pursue the two investigations to give Members an understanding of the nature of the constraints and the process being followed.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action sheet be noted.

No. 7

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024/2025

Consideration was given to report of the Scrutiny & Democratic Officer.

The following points were raised:-

- Final Statement of Accounts 2022/2023 – it was anticipated that the Final Statement of Accounts 2022/23 and the Audit Report and Opinion would be presented to Committee in September. The Chief Officer Resources to provide a briefing session for Members to understand the issues regarding the 2022/23 accounts and the briefing be extended to Corporate & Performance Scrutiny Members and Audit Wales.
- Digital Strategy – would be brought forward to the Committee sooner.
- Timeliness of Reports – concern raised by Members for timely and relevant reports – Democratic Services be requested to review and reassess the FWP to ensure reports are more timely.

RESOLVED, subject to a revised Forward Work Programme, that the report be accepted and the Forward Work Programme 2024-25 for the Governance and Audit Committee be approved. (Option 2).

No. 8

SHARED RESOURCE SERVICE (SRS) ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2023/24

Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.

	<p>The Chief Officer Resources informed Members of the intention to provide more regular reports on the outcome of ongoing audits in the SRS and would include this on the Forward Work Programme.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the Draft Shared Resource Service Annual Internal Audit Report for 2023/24 deeming it to provide sufficient assurance of the internal control arrangements operating within the SRS be accepted and the Audit Plan for 2024/25 be noted. (Option 1)</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2024-2029</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Professional Lead Internal Audit.</p> <p>A Member suggested that the 1 year operational Audit Plan be presented to the next meeting. Quarterly progress updates continue to be provided to the Committee on the 1 year operational plan and on an annual basis the Committee be presented with the revised 5 year Strategic Plan.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the basis for audit selection / prioritisation as described in section 2 be noted, and the audit plan attached at Appendix A, deeming it to provide sufficient coverage upon which the Audit and Risk Manager can provide an annual audit opinion, enabling the Governance & Audit Committee to fulfil its assurance role be approved. (Option 1)</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>COMPLAINTS INFORMATION FOR QUARTER 3 AND QUARTER 4 - 2023/2024</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance.</p> <p>The following points were raised:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assurance be given in terms of the appropriateness of the policy framework that is currently being used i.e. Ombudsman model – was it the most up to date framework. • Consideration be given to broader points raised including the use of a grading system to look at quality issues to better understand the nature and breadth of complaints. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of the accessibility mechanism in terms of the public making complaints/compliments. <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the Committee sought further clarification on areas within the report and highlighted areas of interest or concern that needed to be considered in future monitoring and reporting of complaints. (Option 2)</p>	
No. 11	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that future meetings be held at 9.30 a.m.</p>	
No. 12	<p><u>CONTRACTS - ESTIMATED VALUE BELOW £75,000</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Committee to receive quantifiable progress reports against the Action Plan, from the Environment Directorate, on a quarterly basis, to gain assurance that improvements in processes are made and a follow up Audit be undertaken in 6 months and be included in the 1 year operational Audit Plan.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the Committee considered how they wished to gain assurance that improvements in processes are made and compliance is monitored. (Option 2)</p>	