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## Audit Committee

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 22 January 2025 from 7.00 pm - 7.41 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Andy Booth, Derek Carnell (Vice-Chair), Simon Clark (Chair), Charles Gibson, Angela Harrison, Tara Noe, Terry Thompson and Dolley Wooster.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Billy Attaway, Matt Dean (Grant Thornton), Lisa Fillery, Ibukun Ossai, Claire Stanbury and Katherine Woodward.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Richard Palmer.

### 570 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

### 571 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 October 2024 (Minute Nos. 365 – 369) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### 572 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

### 573 **Annual Financial Report 2023/24 and Audit Findings Report**

The Chair invited Matt Dean, Grant Thornton, to speak. He introduced the Annual Financial Report and Audit Findings report and wanted Members to note that overall, it was a positive report, and thanked the Councils Finance Team for their hard work.

The Chair invited Ibukun Ossai, Grant Thornton, to speak. She referred Members to page 27 of the agenda pack, which stated Grant Thornton were not able to issue the certificate of the audit at the time of writing the report. She had confirmed that since then, the National Audit office had confirmed that once the audit had been completed the certificate could be issued.

Councillor Angela Harrison proposed that at the last Audit Committee meeting of the civic year, the committee should consider whether there was a need to appoint an Independent Person to sit on the Audit Committee for the following civic year. This was seconded by Councillor Charles Gibson and on being put to the vote, agreed.

#### **Resolved:**

- (1) That the External Auditor's Audit Findings Report be noted.**
- (2) That the Letter of Representation be approved on behalf of the Council.**
- (3) That the Annual Financial Report for the year ended 31 March 2024, including the adjustments set out in the report be approved.**
- (4) That the Chief Executive and Leader sign the Annual Government Statement for the year ended 31 March 2024.**
- (5) That the Chair of Audit signs and dates the Annual Financial Report for the year ended 31 March 2024.**

**(6) That the external Auditor's Annual Report including the recommendations and management responses be noted.**

**(7) That at the last Audit Committee of each Civic Year, the Committee would decide if an independent person needed to be appointed onto the Audit Committee for the following civic year.**

The Director of Resources asked the Chair for his permission to use his electronic signature on the Annual Financial Report. The Chair confirmed he would be happy for his electronic signature to be used.

The Chair thanked Matt Dean and Ibukun Ossai, Grant Thornton, for the hard work they had done on the Audit and for attending the Committee meeting.

#### 574 **Internal Audit and Assurance Progress Report 2024/25**

The Head of Audit Partnership introduced the report and summarised the; Resources of the Team; Work that had been completed against the 2024/25 Audit & Assurance Plan; Follow-up of outstanding actions and Provided information around the new Global Internal Audit Standards.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- How confident were officers in completing a draft report on the Audit of Pre-application planning by February 2025?;
- congratulated the Audit team on completing the number of audits they had, given the recent staff vacancy issues;
- pleased to see there were no outstanding agreed actions to be completed; and
- what changes did the Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) bring to the Audit Committee?

The Head of Audit Partnership responded to points raised and said that the team were confident that a draft report would be completed by end of February 2025. In response to the GIAS, she added that the reason for having everyone under one standard was to bring all the internal auditors to the same set of rules regardless if they worked in the Public sector or not.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the work completed so far on the 2024/25 Audit & Assurance Plan be noted.**

#### 575 **Treasury Management Half Year Report 2024/25**

The Head of Finance and Procurement introduced the report which provided an update of the performance of the Treasury Management function for the first half of the year. The performance of the treasury management function had been within the limits set out in the strategy, with no breaches occurring.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the performance information in the report be noted.**

**(2) That the prudential and treasury management indicators within the officers report be noted.**

**576 Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26**

The Head of Finance and Procurement introduced the report and clarified that there were no proposed changes to the Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26, compared to the strategy for 2024/25. She added that appendix I of the report outlined the treasury management prudential indicators that must be set and monitored each year.

***Resolved:***

- (1) That the Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 and the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators be approved.***

Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel