

Minutes of the Extraordinary Audit & Governance Committee held at Riverside, Lowestoft on **Thursday, 2 November 2017 at 6.00pm**

Audit & Governance Committee Members Present:

S Woods (Chairman), E Back, M Barnard, M Cherry, T Gandy, A Green and L Smith.

Officers Present:

S Martin (Head of Internal Audit), A Photi (Democratic Services Officer) and N Wotton (Democratic Services Manager)

1 APOLOGIES / SUBSTITUTES

Apologies were received from Councillor I Graham.

Councillor M Cherry attended the meeting as a substitute for Councillor Graham.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

3 INCREASING THE SIZE OF THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee introduced the report which explained the reason for increasing the Committee membership. The proposal was to increase the Committee's size in order to reduce the potential risks of being non quorate and to add more input into the debating of reports.

The Head of Internal Audit presented the report which proposed increasing the size of the Audit & Governance Committee.

At the Audit & Governance Committee meeting of 14 September 2017, the Chairman raised the risk of a non-quorate meeting, given the number of apologies received and lack of substitutions available. As it transpired three Audit & Governance Committee Members did attend and another joined later. However, this was not the first time that there was a concern about a quorate meeting. The Chairman therefore requested a report to consider the possibility of increasing the size of the Audit & Governance Committee membership.

In addition, when only a minimum number of Members attend there may be a concern about the effectiveness and challenge over the reports presented to the Audit & Governance Committee.

The report described the practical need to increase the Audit & Governance Committee numbers from seven to nine, in order to mitigate the risks of a non-quorate meeting in the future and to ensure effective review of reports takes place.

Paragraph 4.1 of the report contained a summary of the attendance numbers for the Audit & Governance Committee for the last ten meetings which highlighted cases where

the Committee came close to being non quorate. Benchmarking of Committee membership at Waveney District Council and also of Audit & Governance Committees across Norfolk Suffolk and Essex had been carried out.

N.B Councillor Smith arrived at this point in the proceedings at 6.07pm.

The Head of Internal Audit explained that increasing the committee membership to ten had been considered however it created an imbalance with political proportionality. The Committee could therefore consider increasing the membership to 11 members if they so wished.

Members agreed that increasing the Committee size would be beneficial as there were issues in obtaining substitutes due to Cabinet and Deputy Cabinet Members not being able to substitute. Members asked for clarification as to whether Deputy Cabinet Members substituting would be considered. It was also suggested that the meeting be held later in order to make it easier for members travelling in straight from work to attend. The Democratic Services Manager advised that the current advice from the Monitoring Officer was that Deputy Cabinet Members were unable to substitute at Audit & Governance and Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings, and that the viability of the meeting times would be reviewed.

Members agreed that increasing the committee size would add more input into the meetings, widen the debate and mitigated the chances of being non quorate.

RESOLVED

That the Audit and Governance Committee recommend to Council that the membership of the Audit & Governance Committee increase from seven Councillors to nine Councillors.

The Chairman reminded Members of the upcoming training scheduled for the 20 November 2017 and 9 January 2018.

The meeting was concluded at 6.20 pm.

Chairman