



Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee

Monday 19 April 2021 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

David Lane (Chair)

Councillor Ram Lakha OBE (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Alan Butt

Councillor Michael Gough

Councillor Christine Martin

Councillor June Tandy

Councillor Alan Taylor

Councillor David Thain

Councillor Gurmeet Singh Sohal

Coventry City Council

City of Wolverhampton Council

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Staffordshire Non-Constituent Authorities

Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Worcestershire Non-Constituent Local
Authorities

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

In Attendance

Fiona Bebbington

Louise Cowen

Julia Goldsworthy

Victoria Harman

Helen Lillington

Tim Martin

Lorraine Quibell

Grant Patterson

Joti Sharma

Rachel Teoh

West Midlands Combined Authority

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Grant Thornton

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Item Title

No.

71. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Sean Farnell (Coventry & Warwickshire LEP) and Councillor Ahmad Bostan (Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council).

72. Minutes - 4 March 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on the 4 March 2021 were approved, subject to a correction of a minor typographical error with minute no. 64.

73. Chair's Remarks

The chair noted that both Deborah Cadman, Chief Executive and Tim Martin Monitoring Officer and Head of Governance would shortly be leaving the organisation and wished them both well in their new ventures. He also noted a potential change in legislation whereby remote meetings would no longer be able to take place. The Monitoring Officer and Head of Governance informed the committee that the organisation continued to work on contingency plans for consideration of future arrangements of meetings having to take place in person and would continue to update the chair of this matter.

74. Forward Plan

The committee considered the plan of items to be reported to future meetings. It was noted that the Risk Management Framework would be brought to the next meeting for consideration and approval. The chair also noted that following the departure of the Chief Executive the interim Chief Executive would be invited to a future committee to introduce themselves and proposed this for September 2021.

Resolved:

- (1) The forward plan of items to be reported to future meetings be noted.

75. Internal Audit Annual Report 2020 - 2021

The committee received a report providing them with an annual internal audit opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Combined Authority's governance, risk management and internal control processes. The report also summarised the work completed by Internal Audit during 2020-2021 and noted that based on the work undertaken during the year that the authority had been provided with reasonable assurance on its adequate and effective governance, risk management and internal control processes. The Internal Audit Liaison Officer assured the committee that new processes had been put into place to ensure that follow up audits were completed in line with the timetable provided.

The chair requested that the Digital Retraining Fund Internal Audit be reported back at the next committee due to its number of amber recommendations.

Resolved:

- (1) The contents of the Internal Audit Annual Report 2020-2021 be noted.

76. Draft Annual Governance Statement

The committee received a report on the Annual Governance Statement which explained the processes and procedures in place to enable the Combined Authority to carry out its functions effectively as defined by CIPFA. It was noted that the close down of the financial year had not yet been completed and therefore a possibility that an unknown issue may arise and require comment of inclusion prior to final approval.

Resolved:

- (1) The draft Annual Governance Statement be approved.

77. External Audit Plan

The committee received a report from the External Auditors providing them with an overview of the planned scope and timing of statutory audits of the Combined Authority for those charged with Governance. The scope of the audit is set in accordance with the Code and International Standards on Auditing.

The External Auditor drew the committee's attention to the increase fee proposals and highlighted that this was due to new auditing standards and was subject to further discussions with the Finance Director.

Resolved:

- (1) The External Audit Plan for the year ending 31 March 2021 presented by Grant Thornton be noted.
- (2) The proposed fee increase for the year ending 31 March 2021 be noted.

78. Investigations and Whistleblowing Update

The Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer informed the committee that there were no new notification for the committee to be made aware of in relation to investigations and whistleblowing.

79. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 28 June 2021 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at 10.35 am.