

North Devon Council Audit Committee

Date: March 2019

Half Yearly Report of the Chair of Audit Committee

The Audit Committee resolved in May 2014 that the Chair would report half yearly to Council in March and September to highlight key issues that have arisen in the previous period.

The last report was presented in September 2018. Since then the Committee had met on 8th January 2019. The programmed meeting of 6th November 2018 had been cancelled.

Growth Agenda

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Place with regards to the Growth Agenda. He advised that the Growth Agenda corporate objective had been presented to Full Council in 2018. At that meeting a cross-party agreement had been made for:

1. a vision to be developed for transformative growth for the period beyond the emerging Local Plan (2031 onwards), and
2. the Council to engage with Homes England, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Devon County Council on the topic of future growth.

His team were preparing North Devon's Vision for 2050, with the following timetable:

- Present draft Vision to growth group on 30th January 2019
- Stakeholder events from February 2019 onwards
- Present to Full Council in March 2019.
- Community Engagement post May 2019.

He advised there would be risks in taking steps towards this vision. In addition, innovation and digital strategies had been adopted. These strategies had been implemented across the Northern Devon area in conjunction with Torridge District Council.

21:21 Phase 2 Report

The Head of Corporate and Community Services presented the Committee with an update on phase 2 of the 21:21 project. He advised the 21:21 project centred on Service Improvement. Within this there were four original themes of Leaning and Transformation of Services, One Site, Income Generation, and Waste and Recycling. He advised that Castle Street had now been freed up and had been utilized to house those in need of temporary accommodation and that the future aim was to move more staff to BEC. He updated the Committee with the projects being undertaken to transform services, especially in relation to the demands on ICT.

Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy,

Anti-Money Laundering Policy,

and Whistleblowing Policy

The Head of Resources presented the three policies, as above, to the Committee for consideration. The very few changes to these policies related to the names of the policies themselves, and a reference to the reduction of the punishment for money laundering from a term of 14 years to 5 years. The Committee recommended that the three policies be adopted.

To Consider the Recording of Audit Committee Meetings (Sound only)

The Committee considered the implications of recording future Audit Committees and agreed to the recording of the future meetings.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) Audit of North Devon Council

The Committee considered the letter from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) confirming the outcome of their audit of North Devon Council. It confirmed a decision of an overall rating of 'Green' whereby a high level of compliance was demonstrated.

External and Internal Audit

The Internal Audit Progress Report 2018/19, Certification Work report and the External Audit Progress Report and Sector Update were presented at the January meeting.

Internal Audit Progress Report 2018/19 confirmed that four audits had been finalised since the previous meeting. Two further audits had been completed, with the final reports issued: Cash Collection and Housing Benefits.

The External Auditor explained that the Certification Work Report confirmed the Housing Benefit subsidy claim totalled £25.7m. The report confirmed a 'Qualified' claim with an amendment of £1129. The qualifying letter was presented to the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) on 29th November 2018.

The Audit Progress Report and Sector Update: the External Auditors had started planning for the 2018/19 financial statements audit and were due to commence the interim audit in March 2019. The Value for Money conclusion would be given prior to July 2019. The report detailed the Annual Certification Letter of 2017/18 as completed, with the dates planned for the 2018/19 deliverables.

Audit Recommendation Tracker

The Committee was advised in January that six recommendations had been completed since the last meeting of the Committee (in September 2018). Details of those items requiring time extensions were presented to the Committee. The Committee agreed to extend these.

Corporate Risk Register

The Committee was presented with the Corporate Risk Register. The Committee discussed the possible effects of Brexit on the region, along with a withdrawal of the Royal Marines from the local base at Chivenor.