

Audit & Governance Committee

Date of Meeting: 11 November 2020

Report Title: Committee Work Plan

Senior Officer: Jane Burns, Executive Director Corporate Services

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report presents the Committee Work Plan for 2020/21 (Appendix A) to the Committee for consideration and update.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the Committee:
- 2.1.1. Consider the Work Plan and determine any required amendments;
 - 2.1.2. Note that the plan will be brought back to the Committee throughout the year for further development and approval.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. The Audit and Governance Committee has a key role in overseeing and assessing the Council's risk management, control and corporate governance arrangements. It advises the Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements. A forward-looking programme of meetings and agenda items is necessary to enable the Committee to fulfil its responsibilities.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Not applicable

5. Background

- 5.1. Aspects of the Audit and Governance Committee's agenda are determined by statutory requirements such as the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement. Outside these agenda items, the Committee should aim to manage its agenda according to its assurance needs to fulfil its terms of reference. The Committee is asked to consider the contents of the Work

Plan (Appendix A) and establish any amendments that will enable it to meet its responsibilities.

- 5.2. By identifying the key topics to be considered at the Audit and Governance Committee meetings, and receiving appropriate reports, Committee Members are able to undertake their duties effectively and deliver them to a high standard. In turn, this adds to the robustness of the risk management framework, the adequacy of the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and corporate governance of the Council.
- 5.3. Members will recognise that some items are brought to Committee on a more regular basis than others and ensure that statutory requirements are complied with. There are also individual requirements of the Committee's Terms of Reference which are only used on an ad-hoc basis. The Work Plan will be re-submitted to the Committee for further development and approval at each subsequent meeting.
- 5.4. In order to help with their deliberations, Members are asked to consider the following:
 - 5.4.1. Care should be taken to avoid duplication and maintain the focus of an audit committee on its core functions as defined by its terms of reference rather than wider issues that are subject to the work of other committees or assurance functions.
 - 5.4.2. That the Audit and Governance Committee should operate at a strategic level with matters of operational detail resolved by service managers.
 - 5.4.3. The number and frequency of reports should be proportional to the risk in order to give the core business of an audit committee sufficient focus and attention and to avoid lengthy and thus unproductive meetings.
- 5.5. Changes to the Work Plan since the September 2020 meeting of the Committee are as follows:
 - 5.5.1. An update on progress against the Internal Audit plan was scheduled; this was based on the usual updates provided to Committee, however, given the detailed update provided to September, and as work has not yet reached reportable stages, this item has been withdrawn. An update will be provided to the next meeting of the Committee, with a proposed plan for 2021/22 to be presented in March 2021.

- 5.5.2. An additional meeting of the Committee has been requested to take place in January 2021. The Work Plan includes a provisional list of agenda items to be considered at this meeting.

Member Training and Development

- 5.6. Officers will be meeting shortly before this meeting of the Committee to draft proposals for member training and development; once drafted, these will be circulated to Members for comment and feedback, and included in future Work Plan updates

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

- 6.1.1. The Work Plan for 2020/21 complies with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

6.2. Finance Implications

- 6.2.1. When reviewing the Work Plan, Members will need to consider the resource implications of any reviews they wish to carry out both in terms of direct costs and in terms of the required officer support.

6.3. Policy Implications

- 6.3.1. There are no policy implications in this report.

6.4. Equality Implications

- 6.4.1. There are no direct implications for equality in this report. The Audit and Governance Committee receives assurances from across the organisation.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

- 6.5.1. Members should be satisfied that the inclusion of each item on its agenda results in added value, as the assurance process has a resource implication to the organisation and should therefore be proportional to the risk.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

- 6.6.1. Effective internal control and the establishment of an audit committee can never eliminate the risks of serious fraud, misconduct or misrepresentation of the financial position.

However, an effective audit committee can:

- 6.6.1.1. raise awareness of the need for robust risk management, control and corporate governance arrangements and the implementation of audit recommendations,
- 6.6.1.2. increase public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting
- 6.6.1.3. reinforce the importance and independence of internal and external audit and any other similar review process
- 6.6.1.4. provide additional assurance through a process of independent and objective review

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

- 6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

- 6.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

6.9. Public Health Implications

- 6.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

6.10. Climate Change Implications

- 6.10.1. There are no climate change implications in this report.

7. Ward Members Affected

- 7.1. All wards affected.

8. Consultation & Engagement

- 8.1. The Work Plan is prepared following discussion with key officers who regularly provide updates to the Audit and Governance Committee. The Work Plan is discussed with the Committee Chair and Vice Chair.

9. Access to Information

- 9.1. Not applicable.

10. Contact Information

- 10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officers:

Name: Jane Burns

Job Title: Executive Director Corporate Services

Email: jane.burns@cheshireeast.gov.uk