

At a meeting of the Audit Committee held in Cockermonth Town Hall, Market Street, Cockermonth, CA13 9NP on Tuesday 26 November 2019 at 10.00 am

Members

Councillor Alan Tyson (Chair)
Councillor Mary Bainbridge

Councillor Jim Lister

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carole Armstrong, Councillor John Colhoun, Councillor Janet King and Councillor Adrian Kirkbride

Staff Present

L Jardine, B Lennox and E Thompson

Also Present

G Kelly, D Meats

232. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2019 were signed as a correct record.

233. Declaration of Interests

None declared

234. Questions

None received

235. Assurance Risk And Audit Report Quarter Two 2019/20

The Assurance, Risk and Audit Manager presented the Assurance, Risk and Audit Report for the Quarter Ending 30 September 2019.

Members were advised that the chargeable time for the year to date was below targets due to staff sickness absence and under resourcing; however members were advised that a new assurance, risk and internal auditor had joined the team, and that no audit reviews has been removed from the plan.

Members were then advised of the audits in progress and that the Health and Safety Audit was due to be finalised, it was also clarified that if outstanding actions were continually not being completed they would be escalated to the appropriate head of service.

The Assurance, Risk and Audit Manager then presented the review of financial services, members asked questions in relation to payroll, VAT, corporate credit cards and debt recovery.

Members were also presented with the ICT review as completed by Mersey Internal Audit Agency.

Members asked questions in relation to the content of the review documents and shared concerns over the 'limited' assurance classification for the Council.

A written update following this review will be provided to members

Agreed

That the contents of the report be noted.

236. Fraud Policies Report

The Assurance, Risk and Audit Officer presented the fraud policies to members which included the draft counter fraud bribery and corruption framework, the draft fraud response plan, the draft anti-money laundering policy and the draft whistleblowing policy.

Members noted the contents of the reports and asked questions in relation to cost recovery and staff training.

Agreed

Members agreed the contents of each of the new policies

237. Treasury Management Operations – Mid-year review 2019/20

The Financial Services Manager delivered the 'Treasury Management Operations' mid-year review. The officer provided an update of the Economic Climate locally and in the UK and Overseas.

The report summarised the following;

- an update on the economic environment
- updated interest rate forecasts
- interest rate movements during the period
- Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS), Investment Strategy and Borrowing Strategy updates
- a review of the Council's investment and borrowing activities during the period 1 April to 30 September 2019
- a review of compliance with the Council's treasury and prudential indicators for 2019-20

The officer also provided some assurances to members over the council spending and investment strategy and that there was no new borrowing in the last 6 months.

The officer then discussed Brexit and the impact on PWLB interest rates and potential future borrowing options.

Agreed

That the report be noted.

238. Progress Report 2019/20

Gareth Kelly of Grant Thornton LLP was introduced to members as the new engagement lead and presented the progress report for 2019/20.

Members were advised that the 2018/19 audit had been completed and that planning for the 2019/20 audit is due to start in December 2019.

Due to changes within pension reporting, Grant Thornton advised that fees for 2019/20 and onwards would increase.

The Brokenshire Review is looking at the quality of local authority audits and it was explained to members that the timescale of this review had been extended.

Members asked questions in relation to Value for Money, Risk and staffing within the audit profession.

Agreed

Members noted the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 11.35 am