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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH ON 6 JUNE 2013

Present: Councillors Lamb (Chairman), Harper (Vice Chairman), Arculus, Lane, and Sandford

Officers in

Attendance: Steve Crabtree, Chief Internal Auditor
Steven Pilsworth, Head of Corporate Services
Kim Sawyer, Head of Legal Services
Karen S Dunleavy, Governance Officer

The meeting began at 7.15pm to enable enough Members to be present to be quorate.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lee.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 March 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on date 27 March 2013, were approved as an accurate and true record.

4. Outcome of Standards Complaints under the previous regime (pre July 2012)

The Head of Legal Services introduced a report on the outcome of standards complaints under the previous regime (pre July 2012). Members were advised that the complaints that were outstanding which had taken some time to resolve were due to the awaited appointment of the Independent Person for Audit Committee. Members were also advised that following the appointment of the Independent Person in December 2012, the outstanding complaints were progressed and resolved.

Members were also provided with an update over the recruitment campaign to appoint a Deputy Independent Person for Audit Committee. Members were asked to consider the following options:

- Whether Members wished to put the recruitment of a Deputy on hold for the time being and to be kept under review if the number of complaints increased;
- An advertising campaign could be launched in the external media; or
- Consider recruiting persons who were Independent Members of the former Standards Committee.

The Head of Legal Services responded to questions and comments raised by Members. In summary responses included:

- The Deputy would be entitled to an allowance of £500;
- It was possible to postpone the recruitment exercise for six months and then conduct a review to gauge how many complaints were being dealt with;

- The guidance received from the Government over the complaints raised under the old regime stated that the complaints should still be investigated;
- The old regime was a very convoluted process in that the timescale to hold a hearing was three months; however, it was advisable to deal with any complaint received within a month. The new regime was a much simpler process in that the complaint would be discussed with the Independent Person, allowing it to be dealt with in a timely manner; and
- If the Independent Person was unavailable at any point to deal with a complaint, it was envisaged that the time period would not last for more than a few weeks, such as in holiday periods.

Members commented further on the recruitment exercise for a Deputy Independent Person. In summary the comments included:

- Members were opposed to the appointment of a candidate that had had previous experience with the old regime;
- The costs of advertising outweighed the cost of appointing a Deputy Independent Person;
- Consideration should be given to updating the Deputy Independent Person recruitment advert on the PCC web site and that it should be a rolling campaign until a suitable candidate had been found;
- Consideration should be given to approaching a Dean, Bishop or charitable organisation to enquire whether they would be interested in the position;
- A review should be conducted in six months time to ascertain the number of complaints that had been received.

The Committee:

1. Noted the position in respect of all outstanding complaints prior to the introduction of the new standards regime in July 2012;
2. Noted that no further action was to be taken in respect of three complaints where the investigating officer found no case to answer;
3. Noted that four complaints were referred for informal resolution and the status of those complaints; and
4. Received an update in respect of the appointment of a Deputy Independent Person, and determined the next steps it wished to take in this respect.

5. Feedback Report

The Chief Internal Auditor introduced a report that provided an update on the outcome of actions that had been raised in previous meetings.

Following the action point regarding agenda setting meetings for Members of the Audit Committee, the majority of Members felt that there was no requirement to hold a specific agenda setting meeting, due to the fact that the Work Programme was discussed at each meeting.

The Governance Officer suggested that a reminder of the contents of the Work Programme and agenda items could be emailed to Audit Committee Members prior to the agenda despatch date for the next meeting.

The Committee

Agreed that there was no requirement to hold a separate agenda setting meeting and that an email reminder of the Work Programme, prior to the agenda despatch date for the next meeting would be acceptable.

6. Work Programme 2013/14

The Chief Internal Auditor submitted the latest version of the Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2013/2014 for consideration and approval. The standard report provided details of the proposed Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2013/2014 together with any training needs identified.

A training session was to be arranged prior to the presentation of the Statement of Accounts to Audit Committee on 24 June 2013.

Members were also advised that the Audit Committee Handbook was currently being updated and that it would be distributed to the Committee in due course.

AGREED ACTION:

The Committee noted and approved the 2013/2014 Work Programme.

7.00pm – 7.50pm

Chairman

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