

Meeting **GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Date **Tuesday 6 November 2018 (commencing at 1.00 pm)**

**membership**

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

**COUNCILLORS**

Bruce Laughton (Chairman)  
Andy Sissons (Vice-Chairman)

Chris Barnfather  
Nicki Brooks  
Richard Butler  
Steve Carr **A**

Jim Creamer  
Kate Foale  
John Handley  
Phil Rostance

**OTHER COUNCILLORS IN ATTENDANCE**

John Longdon

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Glen Bicknell  
Rob Disney  
Keith Ford  
Laura Mulvany-Law  
Nigel Stevenson  
Marjorie Toward

Chief Executive's Department

John Gregory

Grant Thornton External Auditors

**1. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 26 September 2018, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Rachel Madden (illness).

The following temporary changes of membership, for this meeting only, were reported:-

- Councillor Jim Creamer had replaced Councillor Errol Henry JP;
- Councillor Chris Barnfather had replaced Councillor Mike Quigley;
- Councillor Richard Butler had replaced Councillor Keith Walker.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

None

### **4. INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW EXTERNAL AUDITORS**

John Gregory of Grant Thornton introduced himself to the Committee and explained the background to his company, his own previous relevant audit experience for local authorities and the planned approach for the future. He added that he would be supported in this work by Lorraine Noake. Members welcomed Mr Gregory and his planned approach.

#### **RESOLVED: 2018/054**

That Grant Thornton's appointment as the Council's new external auditors be noted.

### **5. UPDATE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN DECISIONS**

Laura Mulvany-Law, Senior Complaints Practitioner, introduced the report which informed the Committee of the outcomes of recent Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) decisions.

#### **RESOLVED: 2018/055**

That no further actions were required in relation to the issues contained within the report.

### **6. INTERNAL AUDIT 2018-19 TERM 1 REPORT AND 2018-19 TERM 3 PLAN**

Rob Disney, Group Manager - Assurance, introduced the report which detailed the work carried out by Internal Audit in Term 1 and sought Members' views on the planned activity in Term 3 of the Internal Audit Plan.

With reference to the financial difficulties faced by Northamptonshire County Council and the Local Government Association (LGA)'s advice that Corporate Peer Challenges (CPCs) should be undertaken every three years, Members suggested that the Council invite the LGA to arrange a CPC for the Council in 2019. The Chair agreed to discuss this suggestion with the Council's Corporate Leadership Team who would be responsible for agreeing the terms of reference and scope of any such Challenge exercise.

#### **RESOLVED: 2018/056**

- 1) That the Chair refer the Committee's suggestion of a Corporate Peer Challenge for the Council in 2019 to the Council's Leadership Team.
- 2) That the planned coverage of work by Internal Audit in Term 3 would deliver assurance to the Committee in priority areas.

### **7. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING**

Keith Ford, Team Manager, Democratic Services, introduced the report which underlined the existing training offer, sought Members' views on other possible

development areas and requested approval for the attendance of the Committee's Chair or Vice-Chair at the Local Audit Quality Forum event in Manchester on 3 December.

During discussions, Members requested further update training on their audit responsibilities and also on recruitment and selection. John Gregory mentioned that Grant Thornton had provided half hour briefings on specific topics ahead of Audit Committee meetings at other Councils. Members also requested that the Councillor Development Days earmarked in the Council Diary be utilised wherever possible for planned development events.

**RESOLVED: 2018/057**

- 1) That further training be arranged for Members of the Committee on aspects of their audit role and that recruitment and selection training be developed for relevant County Councillors.
- 2) That the Chair or Vice-Chair and a relevant officer from the Internal Audit team attend the Public Sector Audit Appointments Local Audit Quality Forum Event in Manchester on 3 December 2018.

**8. DISCUSSION ABOUT THE PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS QUESTIONNAIRE AND KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FRAMEWORK FOR MEMBERS**

Rob Disney, Group Manager – Assurance, introduced this item, facilitating the discussions in order to collate a Committee response to the nine areas contained within the effectiveness self-evaluation matrix.

**RESOLVED: 2018/058**

That the Committee's response to the effectiveness self-evaluation questionnaire be finalised by the Group Manager - Assurance, in consultation with the Chair, based on the discussions at the meeting.

**9. WORK PROGRAMME**

**RESOLVED: 2018/059**

That the work programme be agreed.

The meeting closed at 2.10pm.

CHAIRMAN