

Enquiries to Committee Services

Direct Dial: 024 7637 6000

Direct Email: committee@nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk

Date: 26th August 2022

Our Ref: MM

Dear Sir/Madam,

A meeting of the **AUDIT & STANDARDS COMMITTEE** will be held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Nuneaton, on **Tuesday 6th September 2022** at **6.00pm**

Please note that meetings will be recorded for future publication on the Council's website.

Yours faithfully,

BRENT DAVIS
Chief Executive

To: All Members of the
Audit & Standards
Committee

Councillors R Baxter-Payne (Chair),
J. Sheppard (Vice-Chair), B. Beetham,
T. Cooper, L. Cvetkovic, L. Downs,
M. Green, J. Hartshorn, J. Kennaugh,
N. Phillips and R. Tromans

A G E N D A

PART I - PUBLIC BUSINESS

1. ANNOUNCEMENTS

To advise the meeting participants of the procedure that will be followed by the Members of the committee.

A fire drill is not expected, so if the alarm sounds please evacuate the building quickly and calmly. Please use the stairs and do not use the lifts. Once out of the building, please gather outside Lloyds Bank on the opposite side of the road.

Exit by the door by which you entered the room or by the fire exits which are clearly indicated by the standard green fire exit signs.

If you need any assistance in evacuating the building, please make yourself known to a member of staff.

Please also make sure all your mobile phones are turned off or set to silent.

The meeting will be live streamed to YouTube and will be available to view via the NBBC website.

2. APOLOGIES - To receive apologies for absence from the meeting.

3. MINUTES – To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 19th July 2022, attached (**Page 4**) and the minutes of the meeting of the Extraordinary Audit and Standards Committee held on 8th August 2022, attached (**Page 9**).

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

Declaring interests at meetings

If there is any item of business to be discussed at the meeting in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest or non-pecuniary interest (Other Interests), you must declare the interest appropriately at the start of the meeting or as soon as you become aware that you have an interest.

Arrangements have been made for interests that are declared regularly by members to be appended to the agenda (**Page 13**). Any interest noted in the Schedule at the back of the agenda papers will be deemed to have been declared and will be minuted as such by the Committee Services Officer. As a general rule, there will, therefore, be no need for those Members to declare those interests as set out in the schedule.

There are, however, TWO EXCEPTIONS to the general rule:

1. When the interest amounts to a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest that is engaged in connection with any item on the agenda and the member feels that the interest is such that they must leave the room. Prior to leaving the room, the member must inform the meeting that they are doing so, to ensure that it is recorded in the minutes.
2. Where a dispensation has been granted to vote and/or speak on an item where there is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, but it is not referred to in the

Schedule (where for example, the dispensation was granted by the Monitoring Officer immediately prior to the meeting). The existence and nature of the dispensation needs to be recorded in the minutes and will, therefore, have to be disclosed at an appropriate time to the meeting.

Note: Following the adoption of the new Code of Conduct, Members are reminded that they should declare the existence and nature of their personal interests at the commencement of the relevant item (or as soon as the interest becomes apparent). If that interest is a Disclosable Pecuniary or a Deemed Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, the Member must withdraw from the room.

Where a Member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest but has received a dispensation from Audit & Standards Committee, that Member may vote and/or speak on the matter (as the case may be) and must disclose the existence of the dispensation and any restrictions placed on it at the time the interest is declared.

Where a Member has a Deemed Disclosable Interest as defined in the Code of Conduct, the Member may address the meeting as a member of the public as set out in the Code.

Note: Council Procedure Rules require Members with Disclosable Pecuniary Interests to withdraw from the meeting unless a dispensation allows them to remain to vote and/or speak on the business giving rise to the interest.

Where a Member has a Deemed Disclosable Interest, the Council's Code of Conduct permits public speaking on the item, after which the Member is required by Council Procedure Rules to withdraw from the meeting.

5. PUBLIC CONSULTATION - Members of the Public will be given the opportunity to speak on specific agenda items or have their submitted statement read by an officer of the Council if notice has been received.
6. AUDIT PLAN 2021-22 – report of the Director for Finance and Enterprise and External Auditors **(to follow)**.
7. ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22 – report of the Director for Planning and Regulations **(Page 16)**.
8. ANY OTHER ITEMS - which in the opinion of the Chair should be discussed as a matter of urgency because of special circumstances (which must be specified).
9. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS - Under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item, it being likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph (i) and (iv) of Part I and II of Schedule 12A to the Act.
10. COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS: 4TH MARCH 2022- 19TH AUGUST 2022 - report of the Monitoring Officer.
11. INVESTIGATION REPORT – COMPLAINT 12/21 - report of the Monitoring Officer.

NUNEATON AND BEDWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

AUDIT & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

19th July 2022

A meeting of the Audit & Standards Committee was held on Tuesday, 19th July 2022 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Nuneaton. The meeting was recorded and live streamed.

Present

Councillor R Baxter Payne – Chair

Councillors: T. Cooper, L. Cvetkovik, L. Downs, M. Green, J. Hartshorn, J. Kennaugh, J Sheppard (Vice-Chair) R. Tromans and C. Watkins (substitution for Councillor N. Phillips).

Apologies: Councillors N. Phillips and B. Beetham.

PART I – PUBLIC BUSINESS

ACS1 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 15th March 2022, be confirmed, and signed by the Chair.

ACS2 **Declarations of Interest**

As a substitute Councillor for this meeting, the Declarations of Interest for Councillor C. Watkins were not detailed in the Schedule attached to the agenda.

RESOLVED that the declarations of interest are as set out in the Schedule attached to these minutes, with the addition of the Declarations of Interest for Councillor C. Watkins.

ACS3 **Internal Audit Annual Report and Counter Fraud Activity 2021-22**

A report of the Head of Audit and Governance (Interim) and Director for Finance and Enterprise was submitted to the committee for consideration.

The report provided the Panel with information including a statement on conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, the results of the quality assurance and improvement programme, a summary of the work that supports the opinion given relating to the overall adequacy and effectiveness of NBBC's framework of governance, risk management and control.

RESOLVED that

- a) this agenda item be deferred to the next Audit and Standards Committee meeting;
and
- b) the Director for Finance and Enterprise and the Head of Audit and Governance (interim) review how future reports are presented, including consideration being given to the use of an Action Plan.

ACS4 **Internal Audit Charter**

A report had been submitted by the Head of Audit and Governance (Interim) and Director for Finance and Enterprise for the committee to consider.

RESOLVED that this agenda item be deferred to the next Audit and Standards Committee meeting.

ACS5 **Audit and Standards Committee Core Work Programme**

The Panel were presented with the Work Programme for the municipal year 2022-2023.

RESOLVED for the Work Programme to be approved subject to

- a) the Internal Audit Charter and the Internal Audit Annual Report being deferred to the next Audit and Standards Committee meeting; and
- b) consideration being given to the inclusion of a review of the Risk Management arrangements, including the Risk Register, as appropriate.

ACS6 **Any Other Items**

External Audit 2020/21 Progress Update

A report of the Director for Finance and Enterprise was presented to the Committee. The report provided an update to Members regarding the progress of the External Audit for the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

ACS7 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

ACS8 **Investigation Report – Complaint 12/21**

RESOLVED for these agenda items be deferred to the next Audit and Standards Committee meeting.

Chair _____

Audit and Standards Committee - Schedule of Declarations of Interests – 2022/2023

	Name of Councillor	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Other Personal Interest	Dispensation
	General dispensations granted to all members under s.33 of the Localism Act 2011			Granted to all members of the Council in the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing matters - Statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 - An allowance, payment given to members - An indemnity given to members - Any ceremonial honour given to members - Setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 - Planning and Licensing matters - Allotments - Local Enterprise Partnership
	R. Baxter-Payne (Chair)	Manager Brinklow Quarry Ltd, Brinklow; County Councillor - WCC	Spouse: Self-employed childminder Member of the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Midlands Combined Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee • Warwickshire Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (substitute) 	
	B. Beetham	Employed at The George Eliot Hospital; Warwickshire County Council – Camp Hill	Member of the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camp Hill Urban Village: Pride in Camp Hill Board • Committee of Management of Hartshill and Nuneaton Recreation Ground 	
	T. Cooper	None	Member on the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camp Hill Urban Village: Pride in Camp Hill Board • Committee of Management of 	

	Name of Councillor	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Other Personal Interest	Dispensation
			Hartshill and Nuneaton Recreation Ground	
	L. Cvetkovic	Head of Geography (Teacher), Sidney Stringer Academy, Coventry	<p>The Bulkington Volunteers (Founder); Bulkington Sports and Social Club (Trustee)</p> <p>Member on the following Outside Bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Control Partnership Steering Group 	
	L. Downs	River Bars Limited; Coventry Plus Beyond the Plane	<p>Member on the following Outside Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hammersley, Smith and Orton Charity 	
	M. Green	Employed by Horiba Mira – Calibration Technician	<p>Chair of Education Standards Committee – St Thomas More School Executive Member – Nuneaton Conservatives. Secretary – St Vincent De Paul Society at Our Lady of the Angels Church. Our Lady of the Angels Church.</p> <p>Member on the following Outside Bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendship Project for Children. 	
	J. Hartshorn	Employed by Nuneaton Library – Digital Inclusion – WCC (Senior Customer Service Assistant) COVID Community Testing – WCC – Team Leader (Casual)	Member of Nuneaton Conservatives	
	J. Kennaugh	County Councillor W.C.C. Employed by FedEx Express UK Limited.	<p>Member of the W.C.C. Regulatory Committee Member of the Conservative Party Member of UNITE the Union</p> <p>Member on the following Outside Bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQulP 	
	N. Phillips	Employee of DWP	<p>Member of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuneaton Labour CLP • The Fabian Society • The George Eliot Society • The PCS Union 	

	Name of Councillor	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Other Personal Interest	Dispensation
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Credit Union • Stockingford Sports and Allotment Club • Haunchwood Sports and Social Club 	
	J. Sheppard (Vice-Chair)		<p>Partnership member of the Hill Top and Caldwell Big Local.</p> <p>Director of Wembrook Community Centre.</p> <p>Member of the Management Committee at the Mental Health Drop-in.</p>	Dispensation to speak and vote on any matters of Borough Plan that relate to the Directorship of Wembrook Community Centre
	R. Tromans	RTC, Nuneaton AFL, Wellingborough	<p>Director of Wembrook Community Centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the Management Committee at the Mental Health Drop in. <p>Partnership member of the Hill Top and Caldwell Big Local.</p> <p>Director of Wembrook Community Centre.</p> <p>Member of the Management Committee at the Mental Health Drop in.</p>	
	C.M. Watkins	Employee of Nutri Pack	<p>Representative on the following outside bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuneaton and Bedworth Community Enterprises Ltd. (NABCEL) 	

NUNEATON AND BEDWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXTRAORDINARY AUDIT & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

8th August 2022

An extraordinary meeting of the Audit & Standards Committee was held on Monday, 8th August 2022 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Nuneaton. The meeting was recorded and live streamed.

Present

Councillor R Baxter Payne – Chair

Councillors: B. Beetham, T. Cooper, L. Cvetkovik, M. Green, J. Kennaugh, N. Phillips, Cllr K. Evans (substitution for Councillor J. Hartshorn) and C. Watkins (substitution for Councillor J. Sheppard).

Apologies: Councillors J. Hartshorn, J. Sheppard, L. Downs and R. Tromans.

PART I – PUBLIC BUSINESS

ACS9 **Declarations of Interest**

As substitute Councillors for this meeting, the Declarations of Interest for Councillor K. Evans and C. Watkins were not detailed in the Schedule attached to the agenda.

RESOLVED that the declarations of interest are as set out in the Schedule attached to these minutes, with the addition of the Declarations of Interest for Councillor K. Evans and C. Watkins.

ACS10 **Statement of Accounts 2020-21 and Audit Findings for Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council**

A report of the Director for Finance and Enterprise and External Auditors was submitted to the committee for consideration.

The report provided the Panel with the final amended version of the 2020-21 Statement of Accounts and supporting documents for approval.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Audit Findings Report and Draft Opinion on the Statement of Accounts be noted;
- b) authority be given to the Director of Finance and Enterprise and the Chair of Audit and Standards Committee to sign the Accounts once final checks have been completed by the External Auditors;
- c) the Letter of Representation be approved as accurate and signed once final checks on the Accounts have been completed; and
- d) the Annual Governance Statement be approved.

Chair _____

Audit and Standards Committee - Schedule of Declarations of Interests – 2022/2023

	Name of Councillor	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Other Personal Interest	Dispensation
	General dispensations granted to all members under s.33 of the Localism Act 2011			Granted to all members of the Council in the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing matters - Statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 - An allowance, payment given to members - An indemnity given to members - Any ceremonial honour given to members - Setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 - Planning and Licensing matters - Allotments - Local Enterprise Partnership
	R. Baxter-Payne (Chair)	Manager Brinklow Quarry Ltd, Brinklow; County Councillor - WCC	Spouse: Self-employed childminder Member of the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Midlands Combined Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee • Warwickshire Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (substitute) 	
	B. Beetham	Employed at The George Eliot Hospital; Warwickshire County Council – Camp Hill	Member of the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camp Hill Urban Village: Pride in Camp Hill Board • Committee of Management of Hartshill and Nuneaton Recreation Ground 	
	T. Cooper	None	Member on the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camp Hill Urban Village: Pride in Camp Hill Board • Committee of Management of 	

	Name of Councillor	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Other Personal Interest	Dispensation
			Hartshill and Nuneaton Recreation Ground	
	L. Cvetkovic	Head of Geography (Teacher), Sidney Stringer Academy, Coventry	<p>The Bulkington Volunteers (Founder); Bulkington Sports and Social Club (Trustee)</p> <p>Member on the following Outside Bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Control Partnership Steering Group 	
	L. Downs	River Bars Limited; Coventry Plus Beyond the Plane	<p>Member on the following Outside Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hammersley, Smith and Orton Charity 	
	M. Green	Employed by Horiba Mira – Calibration Technician	<p>Chair of Education Standards Committee – St Thomas More School Executive Member – Nuneaton Conservatives. Secretary – St Vincent De Paul Society at Our Lady of the Angels Church. Our Lady of the Angels Church.</p> <p>Member on the following Outside Bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendship Project for Children. 	
	J. Hartshorn	Employed by Nuneaton Library – Digital Inclusion – WCC (Senior Customer Service Assistant) COVID Community Testing – WCC – Team Leader (Casual)	Member of Nuneaton Conservatives	
	J. Kennaugh	County Councillor W.C.C. Employed by FedEx Express UK Limited.	<p>Member of the W.C.C. Regulatory Committee Member of the Conservative Party Member of UNITE the Union</p> <p>Member on the following Outside Bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQulP 	
	N. Phillips	Employee of DWP	<p>Member of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuneaton Labour CLP • The Fabian Society • The George Eliot Society • The PCS Union 	

	Name of Councillor	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Other Personal Interest	Dispensation
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Credit Union • Stockingford Sports and Allotment Club • Haunchwood Sports and Social Club 	
	J. Sheppard (Vice-Chair)		<p>Partnership member of the Hill Top and Caldwell Big Local.</p> <p>Director of Wembrook Community Centre.</p> <p>Member of the Management Committee at the Mental Health Drop-in.</p>	Dispensation to speak and vote on any matters of Borough Plan that relate to the Directorship of Wembrook Community Centre
	R. Tromans	RTC, Nuneaton AFL, Wellingborough	<p>Director of Wembrook Community Centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the Management Committee at the Mental Health Drop in. <p>Partnership member of the Hill Top and Caldwell Big Local.</p> <p>Director of Wembrook Community Centre.</p> <p>Member of the Management Committee at the Mental Health Drop in.</p>	
	C.M. Watkins	Employee of Nutri Pack	<p>Representative on the following outside bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuneaton and Bedworth Community Enterprises Ltd. (NABCEL) 	
	K. Evans	Employed by UK Parliament	<p>Sponsorship: Election Expenses – North Warwickshire Conservative Association</p> <p>Membership of Other Bodies: West Midlands Combined Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (substitute)</p> <hr/> <p>Executive Officer – North Warwickshire Conservative Association; Member of the Conservative and Unionist Party.</p>	

Audit and Standards Committee - Schedule of Declarations of Interests – 2022/2023

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	R. Baxter-Payne (Chair)	Manager Brinklow Quarry Ltd, Brinklow; County Councillor - WCC	Spouse: Self-employed childminder Member of the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Midlands Combined Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee • Warwickshire Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (substitute) 	
	B. Beetham	Employed at The George Eliot Hospital; Warwickshire County Council – Camp Hill	Member of the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camp Hill Urban Village: Pride in Camp Hill Board • Committee of Management of Hartshill and Nuneaton Recreation Ground 	
	T. Cooper	None	Member on the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camp Hill Urban Village: Pride in Camp Hill Board • Committee of Management of Hartshill and Nuneaton Recreation Ground 	
	L. Cvetkovic	Head of Geography	The Bulkington Volunteers	

	Name of Councillor	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Other Personal Interest	Dispensation
		(Teacher), Sidney Stringer Academy, Coventry	(Founder); Bulkington Sports and Social Club (Trustee) Member on the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Control Partnership Steering Group 	
	L. Downs	River Bars Limited; Coventry Plus Beyond the Plane	Member on the following Outside Body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hammersley, Smith and Orton Charity 	
	M. Green	Employed by Horiba Mira – Calibration Technician	Chair of Education Standards Committee – St Thomas More School Executive Member – Nuneaton Conservatives. Secretary – St Vincent De Paul Society at Our Lady of the Angels Church. Our Lady of the Angels Church. Member on the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendship Project for Children. 	
	J. Hartshorn	Employed by Nuneaton Library – Digital Inclusion – WCC (Senior Customer Service Assistant) COVID Community Testing – WCC – Team Leader (Casual)	Member of Nuneaton Conservatives	
	J. Kennaugh	County Councillor W.C.C. Employed by FedEx Express UK Limited.	Member of the W.C.C. Regulatory Committee Member of the Conservative Party Member of UNITE the Union Member on the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQulP 	
	N. Phillips	Employee of DWP	Member of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuneaton Labour CLP • The Fabian Society • The George Eliot Society • The PCS Union • Central Credit Union • Stockingford Sports and Allotment Club • Haunchwood Sports and Social Club 	

	Name of Councillor	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Other Personal Interest	Dispensation
	J. Sheppard (Vice-Chair)		Partnership member of the Hill Top and Caldwell Big Local. Director of Wembrook Community Centre. Member of the Management Committee at the Mental Health Drop-in.	Dispensation to speak and vote on any matters of Borough Plan that relate to the Directorship of Wembrook Community Centre
	R. Tromans	RTC, Nuneaton AFL, Wellingborough	<p>Director of Wembrook Community Centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the Management Committee at the Mental Health Drop in. <p>Partnership member of the Hill Top and Caldwell Big Local.</p> <p>Director of Wembrook Community Centre.</p> <p>Member of the Management Committee at the Mental Health Drop in.</p>	

NUNEATON AND BEDWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to: Standards Committee – 06 September 2022

From: Director – Planning and Regulation

Subject: Audit and Standards Committee Annual Report 2021 - 2022

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To present the Annual Standards Section Report 2021-2022 for approval.

2. Recommendation

2.1 The draft 2021/2022 Annual report as set out in Appendix A be approved; and

2.2 The report be published as indicated in the report.

3. Background

3.1 A draft Audit & Standards Committee Annual Report for the past municipal year is attached at Appendix A. The report summarises some of the key activities of the Audit and Standards Committee between May 2021 and May 2022. It is recommended that, subject to approval, the Annual Report be:

- published on the Council's website;
- circulated to all Members (including co-opted members);
- circulated to all Members of the Management Team;
- featured in the next available e-edition of In Touch; &
- placed in reception areas in both Nuneaton Town Hall, Bedworth Civic Hall, and all the libraries in the Borough.

PHILIP RICHARDSON

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

Annual Report of the Audit and Standards Committee

2021- 2022

Introduction

As Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee (“the Committee”), I am pleased to present the Annual Report, which outlines the work undertaken by the Audit & Standards Committee in 2021/2022.

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (“the Council”) remains committed to working under the Standards Regime established by the Localism Act 2011 (‘the Act’). With the change in administration in May 2020, the Committee took the opportunity to review the Regime, to streamline and improve the complaints process against elected Members.

The Committee has worked closely with the Council’s Officers to ensure that the principles of good governance remain central to the business of the Council and, instils public confidence in those elected by the people of the Borough.

We will seek to continuously improve the Council’s audit & standards arrangements and have achieved a number of goals as set out in the Audit and Standards Committee Work Programme 2021/2022. We have been particularly involved in work around:

- The Council’s governance arrangements;
- The annual review of registration of interests, hospitality and gifts by members and officers;
- Streamlining the Complaints procedure at part 5A of the Constitution;
- 6 monthly reporting on Member complaints.
- Reviewing and updating the Mayor’s Protocol following the decision to do away with the Civic Car

In addition, a number of additional items were added to the work programme, including:

- Establishing a Working Party, in advance, to plan the arrangements for the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee.
- The establishment of an Employment Committee.
- A review of the members’ Allowances Scheme related to carers’ allowances.
- A review of how money obtained through planning agreements is collected and spent;
- Changes to the Council Procedure Rules to improve public and Member participation at Council meetings.
- A review of third sector organisation funding by the Council.
- A review of the Delegation Scheme for Officers.
- A review of the use of Non-disclosure Agreements and compensation payments made by the Council.

- Approval to an updated Performance Management Framework & Risk Management Policy & Strategy; and
- The reappointment of 3 Independent Persons to assist with the complaints process, as required by the Localism Act 2011.

In addition, the Committee considered a confidential report in connection with a complaint brought under the Council's Confidential Reporting Code related to allegations of drug and alcohol abuse and criminal activity at the Council's depot.

The Work Programme for 2022/2023 includes such matters as:

- A member training programme for Audit & Standards members;
- Reporting on Complaints on a 6 monthly basis;
- The annual review of registration of interests, hospitality and gifts by members and officers;
- The Annual Report of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman;
- Consideration of the Treasury Management Reports;
- Consideration and approval of the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts for both 2020/2021 (delayed as a result of the pandemic & staffing issues within the Finance Team) and 2021/22 and
- Consideration of the External Audit letter from the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton.

The work and achievements of the Committee would be harder and less effective without the support and contributions of the Members and, the Community. I would like to express my thanks to them. I would additionally record my appreciation of the support provided by the Officers. I know how challenging times have been especially during the Pandemic.

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council has always sought to achieve the highest levels of ethical standards and this new Committee will bring a fresh approach to this.

I have pleasure in presenting the 2021-2022 report.

Councillor R Baxter-Payne
Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

Background

This report records the activities of the Council's Audit & Standards Committee for the municipal year commencing May 2020 and ending in May 2021. Despite the year being dominated by the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Committee managed to continue operating under the special arrangements put in place by the Government to facilitate virtual meetings.

1. The Role of the Audit and Standards Committee

The role and functions of the Committee are clearly set out in Article 9 of the Council's Constitution. This covers such matters as:

- To review the Council's corporate governance arrangements against the Good Governance framework, and consider annual governance report and assurances;
- To consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls, and monitor the implementation of agreed actions;
- To monitor the Council's Anti-Fraud Strategy;
- To receive the Annual Ombudsman Report and make recommendations to Full Council as necessary.
- To consider the external auditor's Annual Letter, relevant reports, and the report to those charged with governance
- To advise and recommend on the effectiveness of the relationships between external and internal audit, and other inspection agencies or relevant bodies.
- To approve the Annual Statement of Accounts.
- To review the Council's Treasury Management activities, and monitor the performance against the approved Treasury Management indicators.
- assisting Councillors and co-opted Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;
- advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct; &
- monitoring the operation of the Councillors' Code of Conduct;

2 The Audit and Standards Committee

- 2.1 The Audit and Standards Committee meetings are open meetings and members of the public are welcome to attend. Committee agendas, reports and minutes are available on the Council website and the meetings are live-streamed on Youtube.

2.2 The Audit and Standards Committee, for 2020/21 comprised of 11 Councillors. In addition, the Committee has one co-opted member to assist the Committee in fulfilling its purpose (although this seat has been vacant for 12 months).

3 Work of the Committee

Our work during 2021/22 has continued to centre on the following main areas:

3.1 Maintaining the highest ethical standards

The Council has ensured that members have been trained to understand:

- the Code of Conduct for Councillors;
- the importance of Maintaining a Register of Member Interest – the code of conduct includes provision for the registration and disclosure of “disclosable pecuniary interests” as defined in regulations. Members with disclosable pecuniary interests in the business of their authorities are prohibited from participating in such business unless they have a dispensation. The Localism Act 2011 has introduced criminal offences relating to failure to register disclosable pecuniary interests;
- that it is their responsibility to register their interests. The declaration of interest forms appear on the council’s website.
- the Investigation of Complaints and a local hearings procedure.

3.2 Meaningful Constitution

The task of maintaining an up-to-date and current Constitution has continued in consultation with the Constitution Review Working Party, especially in the light of recent changes introduced by the Government’s transparency agenda. The Constitution is updated on Council’s website and hard copies issued, upon demand.

3.3 Developing Codes and Protocols

A number of Codes and Protocols were reviewed and some new ones approved, most notably the Social Media Guidance for Members and the Media Protocol. The Council will continue to update and review codes and protocols to reflect changes in legislation and best practice, affecting Members and Officers.

We will also respond to the changing nature of the Council, to give assurance to Members and the public that legitimate complaints will be resolved, whilst action is more swift to protect Members from frivolous complaints, especially those which relate to social media. To this end, a review of the Code of Conduct and the complaints procedure was concluded and the new arrangements brought into effect from the start of the new municipal year 2022/23.

3.4 Monitoring

We keep a watching brief on ethical matters as part of our regular work and we noted that there had been no cases of maladministration determined by the Local Government Ombudsman. This is a significant achievement as our peers in other Council's averaged 50% of investigations being upheld.

The Council also determined that it should keep the registers of gifts and hospitality under a review and receives an annual report as a result. In addition, officers are reminded of their obligation to declare any contractual or other conflicts of interest (as well as elected members).

Finally, the Monitoring Officer reports any dispensations quarterly to the Committee, informing the Committee of to whom they were granted, with reasons for the dispensation and the length of the dispensation.

4 Conclusion

The Council's aim is to continue to develop and maintain a climate of trust and respect in which members, officers and partners work effectively together to deliver the Council' strategic and operational policies. This is done in an honest, objective, transparent, and accountable way to ensure standards are maintained at the highest possible level.

The Audit and Standards Committee complies with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and the regulations and guidance provided under that legislation, and continues to play an effective role in achieving this aim. Furthermore, the Officers of the Council additionally ensuring compliance with new laws brought about by the Coronavirus Pandemic.

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