

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Governance, Audit and Finance Board held on 1 February 2021

Present

Councillor Briggs (Chairman)

Councillors Branson, Crellin, Hart, Keast, Kennett, Patel, Mrs Shimbart and Thomas

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor(s): Inkster

22 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

23 Minutes

The minutes of the Governance, Audit and Finance Board held on 2 December 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

24 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests relating to matters on the agenda.

25 Internal Audit External Quality Assessment 2020

Further to minute 3/12/2020, the Board considered a report setting out the outcome of the external quality assessment of the Southern Internal Audit Partnership (SIAP).

The external assessment had concluded that the Southern Internal Audit Partnership conformed to all aspects of the International Professional Performance Framework, Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note.

Mr Harvey of the Internal Auditors thanked the Chairman, officers and Councillors who took part in the review.

In response to questions from members the officers advised that:

- (a) references to staff turnover in the report referred to staff of the SIAP and not the Council
- (b) although the matrix included all categories and definitions, the SIAP were not rated as poor but as ranging from “good” to “excellent”

RESOLVED the Internal Audit External Quality Assessment 2020 Report, as submitted be noted.

26 Internal Audit Progress Report 2020-21 (September 2020)

Further to minute 4/12/2020, the Board considered:

- (a) a progress report reflecting progress to September 2020, and
- (b) a review of the Council's financial stability with regard to the Council's Covid Response Plan

presented by Antony Harvey of the Southern Internal Audit Partnership, who joined the meeting for the debate on this item and answered member's questions in connection with the report.

The paper provided an update on the progress of internal audit activity completed in accordance with the approved audit plan, and summarised the status of 'live' reports.

The Committee were informed that the internal auditors remained confident that all outstanding work would be completed within agreed timescales.

In response to questions, the Officers reminded the Board that in view of the problems associated with the debt recovery service reported last year, the service would be brought back in house in April this year.

RESOLVED that the Internal Audit Progress Report, reflecting progress to 30 September 2020, as submitted, be noted.

27 Draft Budget 2020-21

The Cabinet Lead for Finance introduced the Council's draft budget for this year and drew the members' attention to adjustments made to enable the Council to balance its budget for next year.

In response to questions raised by members of the Committee, the officers advised that:

- a. The constant savings shown in page 53 of the agenda were either due to normal turnover or an uplift due to inflation;
- b. Given the Council's current financial position, it was intended to increase the current charge for Band D by £5;
- c. any future commitments, such as the agreed increase to Councillor Allowances would be included in the draft budget. However, as the Council had decided to defer an increase in Councillors Allowances, this commitment had been removed from the current proposals;
- d. it was understood that the Disabled Facilities Grant was fully funded by central government;

- e. the service was confident that the £70,000 set aside for the refurbishment of play equipment was sufficient;
- f. the officers would investigate the forecasted sum of £216,000 and advise Councillor Keast of their outcome of their investigations;
- g. the capital sums forecasted for coastal works would fluctuate depending upon the team's yearly work programme;
- h. the receipt for the sale of the land at Brockhampton West would be recorded in the statutory accounts;
- i. income generated by the Meridian Centre was ring fenced and therefore outside normal reporting. Councillor Inkster advised that the rental income was holding up;
- j. the provision of £135,000 set aside for new allotments would be discussed further with the relevant service;
- k. it was hoped that the business transformation programme would bring forward savings to the Council; and
- l. the services were working towards recruiting full time staff to fill posts that were currently filled by agency staff.

The Cabinet Lead thanked the officers for their work during this difficult year.

RESOLVED that the draft budget be noted.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and concluded at 5.52 pm

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Chairman