

Audit and Risk Committee

Minutes - 25 September 2023 at 14:00 hours

Conducted as a public meeting at Headquarters and digitally via
Microsoft Teams

Present: Councillor Barrie, Councillor Jalil, Councillor Mahmood
(Chair), Councillor Little, Councillor Atwal

Virtually: Sarah Jassal (Grant Thornton), Peter Farrow

Officers: Karen Gowreesunker, Sofia Mahmood, Chandni Patel, Tom
Embury

1/23 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Spence and
Simon Barry

Please note: Councillor Atwal substituted on behalf of Councillor
Spence.

2/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest registered.

**3/23 Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 24 July
2023**

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 24
July 2023 were approved as a correct record.

4/23 Audit Progress and Sector Update

Sarah Jassal, Grant Thornton (External Auditor), presented Audit
Progress and Sector Update.

The purpose of the report is to seek Committee approval of Grant Thornton's Audit Plan.

There are significant risks identified by ISAs (UK) as risks that require special audit consideration. As per the report, there are common risks attached to the evaluation of abandoned buildings and pension liabilities.

There is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue. The current assessment of all risks are still being reviewed.

Our approach to materiality was determined at £2.8m, equating to around 2% of the gross expenditure for the period.

There are a team of specialists looking at arrangements the authority has in terms of value of money. There will be a progress report which will cover the 21/22 and 22/23 financial years. This is anticipated to come later in the year as a joint report. There are currently no significant risks to bring to the committee.

The planning work is complete, and the team will be starting the fieldwork phase at the start of November. There is a potential impact on substantive testing because the risk assessment doesn't take into account the control environment.

Resolved

1. That the recommendations provided within the report are agreed upon.

5/23 **Internal Audit Progress Report**

Peter Farrow (Internal Auditor) presented the Internal Audit Progress Report and reminded members that at the start of the year, the internal audit plan was agreed. The progress reports have been brought into the committee to allow members to view and comment on progress being made.

There have been 2 reviews completed this year which were around Data Protection and Partnerships. An overall level of assurance was provided for each area.

Regarding Data protection, there were queries made in the previous review around delays in our service responding to business information requests. Action has been taken and turnaround times have been improved. Having a dashboard such as Power Bi has assisted in this improvement.

The second review was taken on partnerships. Since the previous audit review in this area the partnership activity has reduced in the last 12-18 months due to both COVID-19 and a reduction in the funding available for partnership activities.

Peter Farrow advised the committee that this is focusing on partnership governance arrangements to assure members how well they are embedded in the authority.

Peter Farrow then provided an update on Agenda Item 9, CIPFA Update. He advised that as this is a subscription update, this can be shared with the members however cannot be shared with the wider public.

CIPFA produce updates to help the public sector. This update looks at how as a committee we can ensure their organisations' governance and financial management arrangements are robust. It has provided courses and training information along with useful articles about financial risks.

The article also looks at certain internal audit standards. There have been some changes to some of the standards based on previous consultations, however, there has been no significant impact on how we carry out internal audits.

6/23 **Annual Thematic Audit Report of WMFS Information Governance**

Karan Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority, presented a report on behalf of Martina Doolan. The report is aligned with Peter Farrow's previous presentation but focuses on our Information Governance Audit. It is to assure members that information is being monitored effectively.

As part of the report, section 4 provides an overview of the review of our information governance arrangements. The review came

out clean, with a substantial assurance level. This confirms that our internal auditors have found that we are operating at a good standard and have addressed the previous outcomes mentioned in the last report.

The annual themed review took place between March and August 2023. As part of the process, a number of practices and documents were reviewed. Substantial assurance has been provided around governance information arrangements and no significant issues were identified where improvements could be made. However, the service consistently reviews our policies and ways of working to ensure continuous improvement.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Annual Thematic Audit Report of WMFS Information update be noted.

7/23 **Update on Topical, Legal and Regulatory Issues (Verbal Report)**

No topical, legal, or regulatory issues were raised.

8/23 **Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan**

Tom Embury presented the Work Plan.

Resolved

1. That it be agreed to change relevant dates/titles for the next Audit and Risk Committee in November.

9/23 **CIPFA Report (Private Agenda)**

Presented by Peter Farrow under Agenda Item 5

Meeting Closed at 14.20 pm