

AUDIT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Audit Committee held in the Civic Space, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton, on Wednesday, 12 June 2024 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors Ian Dickson, Jonathan McColl, John Millar, Karen Murray Conaghan, Martin Rooney and Sophie Traynor.

Attending: Peter Hessett, Chief Executive; Laurence Slavin, Chief Officer – Resources: Amanda Graham, Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture and Facilities; Julie Slavin, Chief Finance Officer – Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP); Claire Cusick, Senior Education Officer; Lesley McCabe, Lead Internal Auditor; Fiona Taylor, Head of Health and Community Care; Carol Alderson, Finance Manager; and Lynn Straker, Committee Officer.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Michelle McGinty and Hazel Sorrell; Andi Priestman, Internal Audit Manager and Tom Reid, Forvis Mazars.

Councillor Karen Murray Conaghan in the Chair

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest in any of the items of business on the agenda.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meetings of the Audit Committee held on 21 February 2024 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

OPEN FORUM

The Committee noted that no open forum questions had been submitted by members of the public.

INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2023-2024 – PROGRESS TO 10 MAY 2024

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources advising of progress at 10 May 2024 against the Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24.

After discussion and having heard from the Chief Officer – Resources and relevant officers in further explanation and in answer to Members’ questions, the Committee agreed to note the content of the report.

INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2024

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources advising of the work undertaken by Internal Audit in respect of the 2023/24 Annual Audit Plan and of the contents of the Assurance Statement given to Members of West Dunbartonshire Council, the Chief Executive and the Section 95 Officer (Chief Officer – Resources) in support of the Annual Governance Statement.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to note the content of the report.

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE AUDIT COMMITTEE – 2023/24

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing the Audit Committee Chair’s 2023/24 Annual Report on the Audit Committee.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to note the content of the report.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

A report was submitted by Chief Officer – Resources providing Members with the opportunity to further scrutinise the Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy (including the Investment Strategy) for 2023/24 to 2032/33.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to note that at its meeting on 27 March 2024, Council had:-

- (1) approved the proposed Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy and the indicators contained within;
- (2) approved the continued use of the asset life method (using either annuity or equal instalment) for the repayment of loan fund advances with the exception of spend to save schemes where the funding/income profile method could be used;
- (3) approved the ability to continue to use countries with a sovereign rating of AA and above;
- (4) (i) added the recommendation that the short-term debt profile be capped at 30% and recognised that transitioning from current short-term levels to longer term would take some time and invited the S95 officer to manage the timeline of this change which should be reported on at the next review of the Treasury

management strategy; and (ii) decided to seek to strike off lender option borrower option (LOBO's) as an approved source of long or short term borrowing from our borrowing and debt strategy; and

- (5) to note that the report would be referred to the Audit Committee for further scrutiny.

REVIEW OF LOCAL CODE OF GOVERNANCE AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources regarding the Review of Local Code of Governance and Annual Governance Statement.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the outcome of the recent self-evaluation process in considering how the Council currently meets the agreed Code of Good Governance, together with the issues identified and improvement actions; and
- (2) to note the detail of the Annual Governance Statement and approve the actions identified by management to improve the internal control environment.

The meeting closed at 2.23 p.m.