

## WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 12 April 2022 commencing at 10.00 am.

**Present:** Councillor John McNeill (Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Stephen Bunney  
Councillor Mrs Tracey Coulson  
Councillor Mrs Caralyne Grimble  
Councillor Mrs Angela White  
Andrew Morriss  
Peter Walton

**In Attendance:**  
Emma Redwood Assistant Director People and Democratic Services  
Alastair Simson Principal Auditor, Lincolnshire County Council  
Andrew Warnes Democratic and Civic Officer

**Apologies:** Councillor Christopher Darcel  
Alison Adams

**Membership:** No Members were substituted.

### 58 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

### 59 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the previous Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on 8 March 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

### 60 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests made at this point in the meeting.

### 61 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

With no comment, the Matters Arising Schedule was duly **NOTED**.

## 62 6 MONTH REVIEW OF STRATEGIC RISKS

Members gave consideration to the 6 Month Review of Strategic Risks facing the Council as at March 2022. The Assistant Director of People and Democratic Services introduced the report and provided Members with a brief context of the updated risks and trigger points. A new risk had been introduced in this review, the 'Inability to maintain service delivery with the amount of change initiatives', which would be updated in the next round of reviews.

Strategic risks were considered, those faced by the Council that, if materialised, would adversely impact the delivery of corporate priorities. The approach adopted reflected the guidance provided by the Association of Local Authority Risk Managers. The body advocated that strategic risks should focus on the long-term objectives of the organisation, which could be affected by areas such as financial concerns, political risks, legal and regulatory changes and changes in the physical environment. The Governance and Audit Committee reviewed the strategic risks on a six-monthly basis.

Debate ensued and there was a discussion on the merits of including a separate climate change and sustainability risk, with a Member referencing the work of the Council in recent years. The Officer informed the Committee that further consideration would be given to this matter and the outcome reported in the next review of strategic risks report.

There was also a separate dialogue on the effects of the Council's work on supporting other organisation's work. This included education issues, with comments that West Lindsey District Council's focus had to work holistically with and in partnership with others, such as local academies, Lincolnshire County Council and national administrative and policy bodies.

In response to a query about the meaning of the scores, and a request for greater clarity within the document, for example a Key, the Officer informed Members that the Risk Management Strategy was due for a review in 2023, with the Committee's input taken into consideration in that review.

Having been moved and seconded, on being put to the vote it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that having reviewed the Strategic Risk register, noting the comments made, no additional strategic risks be included; and current controls and proposed actions are considered sufficiently robust.

## 63 COMBINED ASSURANCE REPORT

Members gave consideration to the Combined Assurance Report 2021/22, which presented the work with Assurance Lincolnshire and the wider Management Team.

The purpose of the Combined Assurance Report was to produce a record of assurance against the Council's critical activities and risks. It provided an overview of assurance across the Council making it possible to identify where assurances were present, their source and where there were potential 'unknowns or gaps'. It offered a triangulated view of assurance with opinion provided by management, corporate and/or third-party assurance and Internal Audit. The Combined Assurance Report was produced annually and the report under consideration covered the year ending 31 March 2022.

The Assistant Director of People and Democratic Services introduced the report and

provided context that the report took a cautious approach due to the pandemic.

Debate ensued, and in responding to a query, about the rating of the IT service, the Assistant Director informed Members that the rating reflected the potential disastrous impact that would occur should the service fail to deliver. Constant work was being conducted to ensure its guaranteed running, and the rating meant that this aspect of the Council's service was not overlooked.

Members also heard that for some of the 'amber' and 'red' listed risks that included safeguarding, this was identified by the Council as a potential risk due to staff member changes and shifts of directorate portfolio. In this case, the Assistant Director stated that safeguarding was in discussion for the 2023/24 workplan for Lincolnshire Assurance.

In answer to a comment about the rating of Governance activities, the Officer informed Members that this was due to the cautious approach by the Council in the pandemic, both in the Guildhall, and at the new depot. In reply to a query raised about officer resilience mentioned in the governance section, Members heard that this was due to a cautious approach due to long term absences of staff, which included working with a wider group of officers to continue the provision of services.

In reaction to a query about the lack of ratings for the risk of 'Inability to maintain service delivery', this was the new strategic risk with more work scheduled and would come to the Committee for future consideration, as the amber ranking in the report reflected the apprehensiveness of the Management Team.

Having been moved and seconded on being put to the vote it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (a) the report be approved; and
- (b) the Committee were assured that the finding illustrated that the Council's governance framework was operating effectively.

## **64 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION 21/22 AND MONITORING OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT**

Members gave consideration to the Annual Review of the Constitution 21/22 for recommendation to Council proposed amendments to the Constitution.

The Annual Report from the Monitoring Officer aimed to provide a holistic view of all governance associated matters. The Report was broken down into 13 sections, with a few housekeeping amendments, and any aspect was open for discussion and consideration by the Committee.

Debate ensued and included a discussion on Council / Committee procedure rule, with Members drawing attention to issues surrounding a lack of knowledge in procedures, and welcomed the proposed usage of workshops to aide learning in this area. It was suggested by Members that this subject should be part of Members Induction and that a 'Frequently Asked Questions' quick reference guide may be of assistance

In responding, the Assistant Director advised that the report did suggest Procedure Rules

Training should form part of Members Induction in 2023, and furthermore would be considered mandatory for all Chairmen. The suggestion for a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section/booklet was welcomed by Officers, and would be considered for inclusion in the Members Induction Pack.

There was much debate on the face-to-face/hybrid list of meetings in sections 2.7.4 to 2.7.5. There were differing suggestions regarding a return to pre-pandemic face-to-face meetings for the human element of learning and debate, and home working / connectivity issues, and keeping the focus on online for cost-effectiveness and travel. The Officer gave assurance that the list of meetings was to reflect the current desires expressed and any legislation in place for meetings. The importance of human interaction particularly when joining an organisation could not and had not been underestimated and as such it had been recommended that the induction for the Members elected in 2023 was to be in person.

In acknowledgement to a subsidiary question about the face-to-face aspect of decision making, discussion ensued on Members IT service and potential technologies such as 4G and SIM cards, to which the Officer informed Members that a review would be conducted in the upcoming civic year, and requested Members engaged with the process regarding the facilities provided to Members, where such options could be considered and assessed.

Having been moved and seconded on being put to the vote it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (a) Members agreed that the governance outlined in Section 8 of the report, in respect of managing Commercial and Economic Growth, provided assurance that the council was taking appropriate mitigating measures against the risks identified in its commercial approach.
- (b) The Committee acknowledged the report, as drafted for Annual Council, granted delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee, to update the report, following consideration by the Committee where further progress was likely to be achieved in the intervening period and to reflect Committee feedback.

The Governance and Audit Committee **RECOMMEND** to Council the following:

- (c) that the outcome of the 21/22 annual review, as detailed in the report be noted;
- (d) that the additional amendments detailed throughout Section 3 of this report, identified during the 21/22 review be adopted and implemented with immediate effect;
- (e) the appointments of [the soon to be confirmed individuals] (Section 10) be approved;
- (f) that
  - the progress made with regards to the areas of work agreed for

further development in the previous review (Section 2);

- the areas considered but not taken forward (Section 6);
- the further planned work for 2022/23 (Section 7);
- the statistical data provided within the report in respect of the number, nature and outcome of Code of Conduct Complaints (Section 9);
- the support offered to Parish Council (Section 11); and
- the use of the Council's RIPA powers during the period (Section 13)

be received and noted.

- (g) that the Monitoring Officer use current delegated powers, engaging the Chief Executive, and in consultation with Chairman of the Governance and Audit, to re-align the scheme of Officer delegation, on implementation of a new senior management structure (Section 4).

## 65 WORKPLAN

An enquiry was made regarding the times for future Governance and Audit meetings, which the Assistant Director stated was to be confirmed at the next Annual Council meeting in May 2022.

The Workplan as set out in the report was **NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 11.00 am.

Chairman