

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 March 2020 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr J Beesley – Chairman

Cllr L Williams – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr M Andrews, Cllr S Bartlett, Cllr M F Brooke, Cllr B Dunlop,
Cllr S McCormack and Cllr M White

74. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Cox and from Councillor Vicky Slade, Leader of the Council.

75. Substitute Members

Councillor M Le Poidevin attended as substitute for Councillor M Cox.

76. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

77. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

78. Public Issues

A member of the public, Mr Roger West, made the following statement to the Committee.

The web sites of Pelhams are key: the historical background and the activities are vital to your decision. My guiding principles were helping residents and telling the truth: impossible with party politics. Joined the BIA see -abetterbournemouth.org. Supported Christchurch in their fight against joining BCP. Received three letters of thanks from Sir Chris Chope MP. Communities are vital to us eg. Ensbury Park Library, Post Office, Park Homes and Pelhams. 27/7/2013 asked John Beesley to resign. Had great concern Pelhams would go like the BCCA in Boscombe; false evidence was produced. Am now reassured that BCP will protect it.

On advice from the Monitoring Officer, the Chairman of the Committee stated that, if Mr West had, on this occasion, evidence that he felt should be referred to the Police then that was what should happen.

79. Kinson Community Centre

The Director of Communities presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The report provides a further update on progress being taken to address formal and informal complaints and allegations and followed previous reports to the Committee on 25 July 2019 and 10 October 2019. It was now confirmed that a third-party referral in respect of the allegations made by Kinson Community Association has been made by the Council to Dorset Police.

The Council has been advised by Dorset Police that any criminal investigation must take primacy over any civil or internal processes and as a result, no further action could be taken by the Council until such time as the position relating to any criminal allegations was understood and investigations concluded.

It was reported that there was nothing specific to add since the previous discussion and anyone with evidence of criminal behaviour was urged to pass it on to the Police.

In response to questions about what should happen after conclusion of the investigation, the Chief Executive provided his undertaking that any significant issues that might arise from the Police investigation would be reported back to the appropriate Committee of the Council.

RESOLVED

That Audit & Governance Committee:

- a) note the update provided;**

Voting on (a): Unanimous

- b) delegate authority to determine any further action following the outcome of any criminal investigation, to the Director of Communities.**

Voting on (b): For – 7; Against 2

80. Evolution of Financial Regulations for the 2020-21 financial year

The Head of Audit and Management Assurance and the Head of Strategic Procurement presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

It was explained that this year, and then every year thereafter, the BCP Council would have a new evolution of its Financial Regulations as set out

for the current year in Part 5 of the BCP Council Constitution. Members were advised that the existing version of the Financial Regulations already represented a modernised presentation of a more traditional style in place across Local Government. To achieve this more streamlined approach, complementary procedural explanations and guidance notes had been set out away from the main Regulations document.

The currently proposed evolutionary changes to the Council's Financial Regulations were accordingly set out and summarised in the report and shown in red text throughout the document. These included several minor editing changes made to align to BCP Council convention and terminology.

The attention of the Committee was drawn to more material changes proposed within Part G, Procurement and Contract procedures. These changes incorporated new requirements for commissioning officers and the strategic procurement team in response to the Council's climate and ecological emergency declaration and which would result in more 'sustainable' procurement activity.

During discussion, the new provisions relating to sustainability were welcomed by the Committee. Responses were provided to a number of general questions and, in response to a question about operational aspects of lease renewals and annual inspection of properties held by the Council as landlord, the Head of Audit and Management Assurance undertook to provide Members of the Committee with additional information.

RECOMMENDED that The Financial Regulations as shown in Appendix A of the report to the Audit and Governance Committee be approved and adopted as Part 5 of the BCP Council Constitution.

Voting: Unanimous.

81. Annual review of Whistleblowing Policy, Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy and Declarations of interests, gifts & hospitality Policy

The Head of Audit and Management Assurance presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

An annual review of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy had taken place to ensure that the policies were updated in line with best practice and with legislation and best practice also suggested that both policies should be approved by Audit & Governance Committee.

The Committee was reminded that the Whistleblowing Policy sought to enable individuals to feel confident in raising concerns that were in the public interest about suspected serious wrongdoing. The purpose of the Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy was to highlight relevant legislation and set out the Council's approach.

Some minor amendments had been made to both policies including reformatting to align with corporate BCP requirements.

A key change to the Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy was the addition of a Criminal Finances Act (CFA) 2017 Requirements policy appendix. This would ensure the Council was able to demonstrate adequate procedures were in place to prevent the corporate criminal offence of facilitating tax evasion.

A new Declaration of Interests, Gifts & Hospitality Policy had been created and approved by the Corporate Management Board. This policy was previously seen in draft form by the Audit & Governance committee at its 23 January 2020 meeting and the resulting comments and suggestions had been incorporated.

The Chairman of the Committee thanked the Head of Audit and Management Assurance and his team for the considerable work put in to ensuring that these policies and others elsewhere on the agenda were maintained at an effective standard.

RESOLVED that the Audit and Governance Committee

- a) approve the Whistleblowing Policy and the Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy; and**
- b) endorse the Declaration of Interests, Gifts & Hospitality Policy as approved by the Corporate Management Board.**

Voting: Unanimous.

82. Sustainable Procurement - Presentation

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Strategic Procurement providing a description and overview of the BCP Council's approach to embedding sustainable procurement into the Council's procurement processes. The processes and benefits were described emphasizing the links with the adopted Corporate Strategy values and priorities and sustainability was now becoming firmly embedded within procurement and commissioning procedures. Essential links with the Council's climate and ecological emergency declaration were also underlined.

Members welcomed the improvements in approach generally to procurement both in BCP Council and in Local Government more widely. Pre-market engagement was also referred to and the importance of training and re-education for staff and suppliers as the system was modernised to meet current priorities. The emphasis on encouraging the participation of Local suppliers was welcomed by the Committee.

The Chairman of the Committee thanked the Head of Strategic Procurement for his presentation and requested that a copy of the presentation slides be circulated electronically to Members of the Committee.

Committee Self-assessment

The Chairman referred to discussion at the previous meeting and the request for Officers to explore the potential for a ‘self-assessment’ of the Audit and Governance Committee using the available CIPFA self-assessment tool. This was now being progressed and all members of the Committee would be asked to contribute to the desk-top assessment exercise. The objective was that views of Officers and Members would be combined with a view to recognising existing strengths and weaknesses and identifying areas where there was more that the Committee could be doing.

Future Committees

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee was on 30th April and that there was already a full list of core business identified for that meeting. Additional items for potential exploration by the Committee had nevertheless been highlighted in a canvass of Members by the Chairman. These included Constitutional issues; a look at the way in which the new BCP Council was structured as an Organisation, and finally, the operation of Bournemouth Development Companies.

There was a view the most pressing issue was likely to be a review of ‘BH Live’ including its structure and finances and the scope of its work managing a large and valuable set of Council assets.

The Chairman agreed to liaise with Members on a date for a possible additional meeting during May when this latter issue could be addressed alongside one of the other identified items, potentially the review of Organisation structure.

The Chairman also requested that Members continued to identify additional items for future examination by the Committee.

The meeting ended at 7.33 pm

CHAIRMAN