

**GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Thursday, 26 September 2024**

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Simpson (Chair)  
Councillor(s): R Mullen, R Beadle, M Hall, J McElroy,  
M McNestry and Stuart Bell (Independent Member)

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor(s): H Kelly, C Ord and  
Ian Dormer (independent Member)

**ASC25 MINUTES**

The minutes were approved as a correct record.

**ASC26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**ASC27 OVERSIGHT OF MANAGEMENT PROCESSES 2023-24**

The Committee received a report detailing how the Audit and Standards Committee exercises oversight of management processes in certain areas of governance to provide assurance to the external auditors.

The areas of governance under consideration, together with an explanation of how oversight is exercised by the Committee was detailed and attached to the main report at Appendix 1.

A discussion took place in regard to the Fraud investigation figures and why the report does not include the yearly figures but only the ongoing investigation figures. The members were informed the Committee is provided with a report twice a year with total investigations and ongoing investigations. When queried if the data shows the rate of successful and non-successful investigations, this information will be provided to the committee.

RESOLVED:

- i. That the information be noted.
- ii. The Committee considered the evidence in Appendix 1 and agreed that on this basis an effective of oversight is in place.

**ASC28 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023/24 - INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW OF MANAGERS' ASSURANCES**

The Committee received a report which informed them of the outcome of the work

by the Internal Audit and Risk Service in reviewing in the assurances provided by Service Directors to inform 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement.

The Audit and Standards Committee agreed on 7 March 2024 an assurance framework which would provide evidence for the completion of the 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement. Assurances from managers on the effectiveness of controls they have in place were a fundamental part of this framework.

The 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement audit was carried out using a theme-based approach across the Council. All Service Directors were required to provide evidence to support their declarations made on the Assurance Statement in response to the following questions:

- There are effective data quality and performance management processes for the Service with relevant, accurate and adequate performance information generated with demonstrable links to contribution to delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan. These are reported on a timely basis, with appropriate action taken to address performance issues; and
- The Service has identified its sources and flows of information including rights of access. Threats and risks to information assets owned by the Service have been assessed and recorded with corresponding action plans for reducing risks where appropriate. All staff have received appropriate training in relation to data security and GDPR. Any data breaches are formally reported and where a data breach has occurred a review of the incident is carried out and, where appropriate, additional training is provided, and systems and procedures assessed to identify any improvements to the controls to prevent future data breaches.

The audit concluded that systems and controls were operating well, and no recommendations have been made.

The overall conclusion of this work is that the systems and processes for the completion of the Managers' Assurance Statements are effective and that they provided a good level of assurance for the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement.

RESOLVED:

- i. That the information be noted.

## **ASC29 ACHIEVEMENT OF GOING CONCERN STATUS 2023-24**

The Committee were presented with a report which asks the Committee to consider the Council's status as a going concern and to agree bases on the information provided in the report that it is.

As Local Authorities are created and abolished only by statutory changes there is an underlying assumption in the 2023/24 CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting (Accounting Code) that their accounts will be prepared on a going concern basis.

Authorities are required by Section 32 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to set a balanced budget. Although the financial context continues to be challenging and uncertain the Council has a strong track record of meeting its financial obligations and maintaining financial sustainability through delivery within budget.

The Annual audit letter from Mazars includes a commentary on the Council's value for money arrangements which considers financial sustainability, governance and economy efficiency and effectiveness.

RESOLVED:

- i. That the Committee agrees the Council is considered to be a going concern based on the assessment in the report presented.

**ASC30 MAZARS EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee received a report updating them on the progress and current findings of the audit of Gateshead's Statement of Accounts 2023/24 by the Council's external auditor Mazars.

The report outlined: Audit progress, Areas outstanding and National Publications.

A new Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 Act was laid before Parliament for implementation on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. The Act includes new deadlines for the publication of audited accounts for local authorities in England and Wales.

RESOLVED:

- i. That the information be noted.

**ASC31 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at 4pm.

**Chair.....**