

Audit Committee

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024

PRESENT:-

Honorary Alderman Fenwick (Chair), Coward, Collinson M, Henry, Herrera-Richmond, Neal K, Robinson and Thompson D.

IN ATTENDANCE:-

D. Bell (Director of Finance and Transformation and Section 151 Officer), M. Armstrong (Head of Accountancy), K. Blaza (Accounting and Control Manager), M. Garlick (Customer Feedback Team Leader), M. Outterside (Mazars), N. Hallas (Mazars), R. Shaw (Mazars), D. Newens (South West Audit Partnership) and P. Todd (Democratic Services Officer).

<b>Minute No.</b>	<b>Description/Decision</b>	<b>Action By/Deadline</b>
12	<p><b>INTRODUCTIONS</b></p> <p>The Chair introduced M. Outterside from Mazars and D. Newens from South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) and announced the departure of P. Holland from Hull City Council.</p> <p>The Director of Finance and Transformation confirmed P. Holland had started a new position in Ashfield Council.</p> <p>The Committee extended their thanks and best wishes to P. Holland.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> – that a card be sent from the Committee to P. Holland.</p>	Director of Finance and Transformation
<b>PROCEDURAL ITEMS</b>		
13	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>No declarations of interest were received in respect of the items that follow below.</p>	
14	<p><b>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2024</b></p> <p><b>Agreed</b> – that the minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2024 be taken as read and correctly recorded and be signed by the Chair.</p>	

NON-EXEMPT ITEMS		
15	<p><b>WHISTLEBLOWER AND MEMBERS' COMPLAINTS</b></p> <p>The Director of Legal Services and Partnerships provided a report that detailed Whistleblower complaints and complaints about Members, for the year ending 31 March 2024, and the actions the Council took to resolve them.</p> <p>The Committee were informed that the largest change was the increase in reporting, especially with regards to whistleblowing. This was due to the accessibility of reporting now being made available online as well as via a paper form. There had been a low reported volume of both Whistleblower and Member complaints, as well as a low volume of upheld complaints.</p> <p><b>Agreed -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. That the Committee notes the content of the report and the degree of assurance this provides in relation to the Council's governance arrangements, and</li> <li>b. that the Committee continues to receive an annual report.</li> </ul>	b. Director of Legal Services and Partnerships
16	<p><b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN AND HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE – ANNUAL REPORT</b></p> <p>The Director of Legal Services and Partnerships submitted a report that detailed the Council's Annual Review Letter 2024 about complaints made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman Service for the year ending 31 March 2024 and the actions the Council had taken to resolve them. The report also provided the annual report on the Council's complaint performance in respect of its role as a landlord.</p> <p>The Committee were informed that the LGSCO had given a positive annual review of Hull City Council, with its lowest recorded figures of complaints that had been received by the Ombudsman in five years. The number of complaints that had been received by the Council had increased, which suggested the</p>	

<p>Council’s response to complaints was robust and effective and handling them.</p> <p>A discussion took place on those cases that had been received by the Ombudsman (1.63%) and that only five had been upheld out of forty-four. Members queried the significant drop in Childrens Services Complaints and were advised that based on trends, next year would see an increase in complaints linked to Child Benefit Deductions. Members were pleased with the results and congratulated the report.</p> <p>The Committee were also informed about the new complaint handling code for the Housing Ombudsman Service, that came into effect in April 2024, which partially covered complaints received in the Council’s role as a landlord. The annual letters had not yet been published however three investigations had been upheld by the Ombudsman. Two of the complaints were from the same tenant and had been appropriately resolved, whereas the third complaint had been appealed by the Council and officers awaited the results.</p> <p>Members asked questions on the learning points from the investigations and timescales to implement the new measures. The Customer Feedback Team Leader advised the Committee that the Ombudsman would give a timescale of no more than three months to resolve any issues found.</p> <p><b>Agreed –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. That the Committee note the contents of this report and the degree of assurance this provides in relation to the Council’s governance arrangements;</li> <li>b. that the Committee continues to receive an annual report to inform its role in considering the Council’s Annual Governance Statement and maintaining appropriate oversight with regard to the potential receipt of any public reports from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, and</li> <li>c. that the Committee continues to receive an annual report to comply with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service’s Complaint Handling Code.</li> </ul>	<p>b-c. Director of Legal Services and Partnerships</p>
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