

Audit and Standards Committee

Meeting held 23 January 2020

PRESENT: Councillors Simon Clement-Jones (Chair), Angela Argenzio, Adam Hurst, Mohammed Mahroof, Josie Paszek and Liz Stanley (Independent Co-Opted Member)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pat Midgely and Sioned-Mair Richards.

2. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

2.1 The Chair (Councillor Simon Clement-Jones) stated that the report and appendices at agenda item 11 (Strategic Risk Management) (See minute no. 11 below) were not available to the public and press because they contained exempt information described in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person. Accordingly, the public and press would be excluded from the meeting during consideration of that item of business.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest made.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 **RESOLVED:** That, the minutes of a meeting of the Committee held on 19th December 2019 were approved as a correct record.

5. ICT SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE ASSET MANAGEMENT

5.1 Mike Weston, Assistant Director ICT Service Delivery, attended the meeting to present the report.

5.2 The report provided the Committee with an update on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Software Asset Management and Hardware Asset Management Audit reports finalised in March 2019.

5.3 Numerous requests had been made for Capita to provide information to support the audits, but this was not forthcoming. Therefore, BCIS and Audit had agreed the final report assurances, but significant progress on implementation of the

recommendations was only really possible post exit from the Capita contract which occurred on 4th January 2020.

- 5.4 Policies in relation to software and hardware asset management had been drafted and would be presented to the February meeting of the ICT Strategy Board. A new service management tool had also been implemented and contracts and licences relating to Sheffield ICT had been given back to the Council. A roll out of new equipment was also being carried out.
- 5.5 Councillor Josie Paszek asked if there were any expectations of timescales by which the work could be implemented. Mike Weston hoped that a full inventory of assets would be complete by early Summer, most of the PC's were over 9 years old and were now in the process of being replaced.
- 5.6 Councillor Mohammed Mahroof asked what the costs of the transition were. It was explained that the costs of the replacement equipment would be funded from the savings made by bringing ICT back in house and the actual costs were being finalised.
- 5.7 **RESOLVED:** That (1) the current positions be noted and a further report be provided to the Audit and Standards Committee by June 2020 and;
- (2) Copies of the Audit Reports be recirculated to Audit and Standards Committee Members for information.

6. UNIVERSAL CREDIT

- 6.1 Tim Hardie, Head of Commercial Business Development, Maxine Stavraniakos, Head of Neighbourhood Intervention and Tenant Support and Cat Arnold, Policy and Improvement Officer attended the meeting and presented the report.
- 6.2 The report provided Committee with an update following the introduction of Universal Credit (UC), which had now been in operation in Sheffield for over 12 months, and gave further information on how UC had impacted on housing rent arrears, take up of Council Tax Support and the experiences of vulnerable groups in the city.
- 6.3 Councillor Paszek asked whether and decision had yet been made on further ongoing support for claimants. Tim Hardie replied that it was hoped that the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) would continue their support.
- 6.4 A further question was asked about what percentage of housing rent arrears were due to UC and it was answered that 10% of tenants were receiving UC, but not all benefit claimants were on UC, there was a mix of legacy benefits. It was expected that up to 16,000 people would eventually be claiming UC and it should be noted that it was paid in arrears which created a natural upwards pressure. The Council worked closely with the DWP and CAB to get advice and support out to claimants.
- 6.5 Councillor Josie Paszek asked whether everyone claiming UC had to have a bank

account. Maxine Stavraniakos confirmed that UC claimants needed to have a bank account, but it did not have to support direct debits which were the Council's preferred method of collecting payment. Work was being carried out with Customer Support to ensure that other methods were available to claimants.

- 6.6 Tim Hardie explained that when new UC claims were received by the Council, they were also treated as Council Tax support claims which was made easier as the teams were more able to work more closely together since the insourcing of Revenues and Benefits. Rent Officers were also talking to tenants about rent and council tax at the same time.
- 6.7 Councillor Paszek asked about under 25's and other vulnerable groups. It was explained that the Council was working with the CAB to set up surgeries to speak with care leavers.
- 6.8 Councillor Mohammed Mahroof asked how the Council could help stop exploitation of vulnerable groups by people offering to fill out forms for money. Cat Arnold explained that the DWP reported issues to the Police when known and work was being carried out with the Communications Department to work on communication regarding how to access free support. This would be available in community languages.
- 6.9 Eugene Walker, Executive Director – Resources, explained that the Council had received funding to work on applications for EU status following Brexit and this would help ensure that there were trusted places for people to go to access support. The Council also attended the Private Landlord Forum.
- 6.10 Councillor Angela Argenzio asked how people with disabilities had been affected by UC. Cat Arnold said that there was anecdotal evidence that people with disabilities had been adversely affected. UC was a web based system, but there was a telephone system in place.
- 6.11 Eugene Walker informed Committee work was being undertaken to measure the impact of UC and the Council's role was increasingly becoming one of advocacy, questioning and scrutiny. UC was administered by the DWP, so the Council could only lobby to try to make things easier.
- 6.12 Councillor Angela Argenzio asked if the Council worked with any charities and carried out training on how they could support people. Cat Arnold explained that the DWP had run many awareness sessions for local organisations, charities and private landlords. All Council staff and DWP staff were trained to spot safeguarding issues.
- 6.13 **RESOLVED:** That the information set out in the report and appendices be noted.

7. PFI OBJECTION

- 7.1 This item was withdrawn.

8. ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2018/19

- 8.1 Hayley Clarke, Ernst and Young (the Council's external auditors), attended the meeting to present the report.
- 8.2 The Annual Audit Letter 2018/19 was produced by Ernst and Young and informed the Council of the areas of work carried out and the conclusions made. There were no areas of public interest found and an unqualified report had been issued.
- 8.3 **RESOLVED:** That the Annual Audit Letter 2018/19 be noted.

9. PROGRESS ON HIGH OPINION AUDIT REPORTS

- 9.1 Kayleigh Inman, Senior Finance Manager, attended the meeting and presented the report.
- 9.2 Kayleigh informed Committee that 11 recommendations had been followed up. Three had been implemented and seven were ongoing, some of which were regarding the insourcing of ICT and the Tech 2020 project.
- 9.3 There were no new reports to add and two recommendations had been removed as they had now been completed.
- 9.4 Liz Stanley, Independent Co-Opted Member, asked what the situation was regarding the review of Subject Access Requests as there had been no update. Kayleigh explained that regular contact had been maintained with the manager and work was underway to complete the recommendations.
- 9.5 A further question was asked regarding the insourcing from Capita and the length of time it was taking. Kayleigh explained the current systems were being maintained while insourcing was taking place.
- 9.6 **RESOLVED:** That; (1) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (2) The removal of the following reports from the tracker be approved:
- Training Centres – Recovery Planning and Monitoring (People)
 - The Licensing Service (Place)

10. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

- 10.1 **RESOLVED:** That the public and press be excluded from the meeting before discussion takes place on the following item of business (Strategic Risk Management) on the grounds that, if the public and press were present during the transaction of such business, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as described in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

11. STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT

- 11.1 Helen Molteno, Finance Manager, attended the meeting and presented the report.
- 11.2 The presentation provided an assessment of the Council's current Risk Management arrangements and the measures implemented to further strengthen and improve them and the current and emerging risks, their impact on service delivery and the controls in place to manage them.
- 11.3 The report and presentation covered the period from July to September 2019. The Finance Manager, Assistant Director of Finance and the Director of Legal and Governance responded to questions from Members of the Committee in relation to mandatory training, level of reserves and employee morale.
- 11.4 **RESOLVED:** That; (1) the current assessment of the Council's risk management arrangements be noted and the measures taken to strengthen those arrangements be endorsed and;
- (2) the current and emerging risks be noted and the actions being taken to mitigate those risks be endorsed.

12. WORK PROGRAMME

- 12.1 Gillian Duckworth, Director of Legal and Governance, presented the report which gave an outline of the Committee's work programme.
- 12.2 It was suggested the meeting to be held on 20th February 2020 be cancelled and the items be moved to 19th March 2020 to enable better attendance at the meeting.
- 12.3 Hayley Clark suggested that the External Audit Plan be brought forward to the meeting on 19th March 2020.
- 12.4 **RESOLVED:** That; (1) including the changes above, the work programme be approved.

13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- 13.1 It was noted that meetings of the Committee would be held at 5.00pm on:-
- Thursday 19th March 2020
Thursday 16th April 2020
Thursday 11th June 2020
Thursday 30th July 2020

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