

## **Audit and Governance Committee**

Held at:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone
Date	Wednesday, 6 December 2023
Present	Councillors James Butcher (Vice-Chair), Adrian Lockwood, Liz McShane (Chair), David Wimble and John Wing
Apologies for Absence	Councillor Liz Grant
Officers Present:	Paul Butler (Democratic Services and Lead Specialist), Gavin Edwards (Performance and Improvement Specialist), Amandeep Khroud (Assistant Director), Sue Lewis (Committee Services Officer), Lydia Morrison (Interim S151 Officer), Mrs Christine Parker (Head of Audit Partnership), Mr Chris Parker (Deputy Head of Audit), Sophia.Y.Brown@uk.gt.com and Adrian Tofts (Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist)
Others Present:	Sophia Y Brown, Grant Thornton Andy Vanburen – Independent Member

### **20. Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Butcher, Lockwood and Wing declared that they were all directors on the Board of Oportunitas. They remained in the meeting.

### **21. Minutes**

The Chair asked if there was an update with regards to the service Veolia provided. An update would be circulated once the relevant officers had been spoken to.

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2023 were submitted, approved and signed by the Chairman.

### **22. Review of Polling District and Polling Places 2023**

Section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by Part 4 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006) places a duty on the Council to

conduct a review of polling places and polling districts every four years. The last review was concluded by Folkestone & Hythe District Council in September 2019. This Report outlines the steps the Council is taking to comply with this duty and seeks approval from Council to approve the provisional decisions and resulting recommendations made.

The Democratic Services and Elections Lead Specialist informed members that the 6-week consultation included, in addition to satisfying statutory requirements, over 900 community organisations being contacted to invite comment about the current set up, and about the proposals from the Acting Returning Officer. The Acting Returning Officer proposals, representations and comments that have been received have resulted in recommendations for several changes to polling places (stations) and these are shown in appendix 2 of the report. He would also like to thank all those polling stations who have helped in the past, present and future.

Proposed by Councillor John Wing  
Seconded by Councillor Adrian Lockwood and

**Resolved:**

- 1. To receive and note report AuG/23/15.**
- 2. To approve the provisional decisions listed in this report as the Polling Districts, Polling Places and Stations for the next four years, or until an ad-hoc review triggered by the Council in the interim.**
- 3. To adopt the proposals as outlined in Appendix 2, with the implementation to coincide with the revision or alteration of the electoral register on 01 February 2024.**

(Voting: For 4; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

**23. Update to Corporate Risk Register**

The report provided an update to the Corporate Risk Register, last considered by the Audit and Governance Committee on 13 September 2023.

The Strategy, Policy and Performance Lead Specialist updated members on the changes and risks reflected in the appendices to the report, informing that there would be a further update on the projects in March 2024.

The following points were noted:

- That although the report indicated 9 extreme, 6 high and 1 moderate rating this was not unusual, and members should not be worried as the report is not materially different from previous update reports taken to the committee, but it does reflect the importance of the major projects captured by the risk register and the economic climate affecting councils across the country.

- C1 Organisational Capacity – this is reported to the Personnel Committee throughout the year.
- C2 Delivery of Otterpool Park – officers are monitoring the governance arrangements and will report back to the committee regularly.
- C12 Cyber Threat – ICT colleagues continue to upgrade and monitor the systems with regular updates presented to CLT and then, if the severity of the situation required, reported to members.

Proposed by Councillor James Butcher  
Seconded by Councillor John Wing and

**Resolved:**

- 1. To receive and note report AuG/23/16.**

(Voting: For 4; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

**24. Quarterly Internal Audit Update Report from the Head of East Kent Audit Partnership**

The report includes the summary of the work of the East Kent Audit Partnership (EKAP) since the last Audit and Governance Committee meeting together with details of the performance of the EKAP to the 30th September 2023.

The Deputy Head of Audit informed that there have been three main reports completed in the period with one of these being a partial limited assurance, a management response was included for Independent Living. Additionally, six follow up reviews had taken place with some increased assurances which provides assurance that agreed recommendations have been implemented.

Audit plan completion to the half year is 41.71% against the target of 50%; and to the end of November is 57.66% against the target of 66.67%.

The Head of Audit informed members of how the work is carried out to reach a draft report and that an action plan is agreed with officers when the report is finalised. All recommendations are tracked by EKAP, with independent testing undertaken for Critical and High priority recommendations with the results of the follow up work to then be reported to the committee.

The following points were noted:

- PEEPs – the management response provided indicated officers are confident that this will reach 100% by January 2024.
- Homelessness – at the time of follow up the recommendation had not been implemented by the due date. Management would need to provide a further response to the next meeting.
- Contract Management, Governance and Controls – the s.151 Officer reported that the Corporate Governance Board are putting procedures in

place and will report back to the next meeting, training gaps have been identified but officers are confident these will be resolved.

- Internal Audit Performance – the measure is against achieving the agreed 350 days by the end of March each year (over 12 months). The percentage reported could be against the quarterly target, it has always been reported this way, as it is simply cumulative as the year progresses.

Proposed by Councillor Adrian Lockwood  
Seconded by Councillor James Butcher and

**Resolved:**

1. **To receive and note Report AuG/23/17.**
2. **To note the results of the work carried out by the East Kent Audit Partnership.**

(Voting: For 4; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

25. **Grant Thornton Audit Plan for the Year Ended 31 March 2023**

The report presents the Grant Thornton Audit Plan, which focuses on their proposed work on auditing the statement of accounts for 2022/23 and an update on the audit fees.

The Audit Partner, Grant Thornton informed members that there were no significant changes from 21/22, the risks were similar and reported in the report.

It was noted that the accounts audit will now complete March 2024 instead of February 2024, the reasons for this are shown within the report. The timetable is very tight to meet deadlines.

Proposed by Councillor John Wing  
Seconded by Councillor Adrian Lockwood and

**Resolved:**

1. **To receive and note Report AuG/23/18.**
2. **To receive and note Grant Thornton's Audit Plan for the year ended 31 March 2023 and audit fees as outlined within the Appendix to this report.**

(Voting: For 4; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

26. **Update on Change of Governance Arrangements**

The report provides the Committee with a brief update on the progress of the work of the Constitution Working Group in relation the Council's decision on 21 June 2023 to change its governance arrangements from a Leader and Cabinet

executive form of governance to committee system as of the Annual Meeting of Council to be held in May 2024.

The Assistant Director - Governance, Law & Service Delivery highlighted the progress to date and thanked the Constitution Working Group for their work so far, informing that an all-member briefing on 11 December will update members on this work.

The following questions were raised by members.

1. Where does Overview and Scrutiny sit within the new structure?
2. How many more meetings will there be?
3. Will the position of Chair be held by the same person for the main two committees?
4. Co-ordination between the committees proposed and how they will work?
5. Executive/portfolio holders – where will they sit in the new structure?

Answers:

1. Each issue will be referred to the relevant committee within the new structure.
2. Following discussions with other authorities who have the committee system in place it is anticipated there will be more meeting, but as yet we do not know.
3. It will be for set out in the constitution, but it is not good practice to have the same person chair both main committees.
4. Each committee will have its own Terms of Reference and work is ongoing in respect of the chair/vice-chairs having spokesperson roles, an idea at this stage. There will be some overlapping of work but again there are still issues to look at before any final decisions on how things will work are ongoing.
5. There will not be portfolio holders in the new structure.

The Assistant Director - Governance, Law & Service Delivery informed that a timetable of works can be circulated to members and there will be more training for members and officers as things progress.

The new constitution will be presented to the committee and full council in due course and it was agreed to have inclusive language for all.

Proposed by Councillor James Butcher  
Seconded by Councillor John Wing and

**Resolved:**

- 1) **That the Committee note:**
  - (a) **the progress of the Constitution Working Group; and**
  - (b) **a Member Briefing Session to outline objectives and structure is due to take place on 11 December 2023.**

(Voting: For 5; Against 0; Abstentions 0)

27. **Annual Governance Statement Actions - update on 2023/24 actions**

The report presented the current position on progress towards achieving the 2023-24 actions set out in the Annual Governance Statement.

The Assistant Director - Governance, Law & Service Delivery informed that during the process all Terms of Reference will be updated to reflect changes moving forward but it is anticipated that the Audit and Governance would remain the same.

Proposed by Councillor Adrian Lockwood  
Seconded by Councillor David Wimble and

**Resolved:**

- 1. To receive and note report AuG/23/20.**
- 2. To note the progress towards achieving the actions in the Annual Governance Statement (Appendix 1).**

(Voting: For 5; Against 0; Abstentions 0)