

Minutes of the meeting of the **JOINT AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Monday, 26 July 2021

PRESENT:

Councillors:	Oliver Amorowson,	Simon Barrett
	Paul Ekpenyong (Substitute for James Caston)	Bryn Hurren (Co-Chair)
	Mary McLaren	Dave Muller (Co-Chair)
	Mike Norris	

In attendance:

Officers:

- Emily Yule – Monitoring Officer
- Katherine Steel – Assistant Director Corporate Resources
- Melissa Evans – Corporate Manager Finance and Commissioning and Procurement

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Robert Lindsay

39 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

39.1 There were no Declaration of Interests made.

40 JAC/21/1 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17TH MAY 2021

40.1 Councillor McLaren enquired if the additional information referred to in paragraph 36.2 of the minutes had been circulated.

40.2 The committee were informed that the information would be circulated after the meeting.

It was RESOLVED:-

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th May 2021 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

41 TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COUNCIL'S PETITION SCHEME

41.1 None received.

42 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

42.1 None received.

43 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

43.1 None received.

44 JAC/21/2 TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2020/21

- 44.1 Mellissa Evans – Corporate Manager Finance and Commissioning and Procurement introduced report JAC/21/2 and made the committee aware of an error within Appendix C of the report, Table 4 for Mid Suffolk.
- 44.2 Councillor McLaren asked what the impact would be of having different interest rates for long-term borrowing as shown in the table in paragraph 4.7 of the report.
- 44.3 Melissa Evans explained that interest rates stated in the table were the historic PWLB borrowing relating to the council housing stock and at the time of borrowing there were separate Section 151 officers for the two Councils that made different decisions.
- 44.4 Councillor McLaren also asked if the current high level of unemployment would impact the council.
- 44.5 Katherine Steel replied that it would not impact the treasury management activity but may impact other aspects of the councils activity for example the level of council tax reduction scheme claimants.
- 44.6 Councillor Ekpenyong asked about the movement in the CCLA and Investec Investments shown in Table 4 on Page 24 of the report.
- 44.7 Melissa Evans stated that this was the error mentioned in her introduction and that there had been no movement.
- 44.8 Councillor Ekpenyong stated that it was not clear from the report if money had been lost on the Money Market fund and enquired what advice had been received and what costs had been incurred.
- 44.9 Melissa Evans replied that no money had been lost. Returns had been lower than in previous years, but broker fees had also been reduced to leave the Councils in a very small net positive position.
- 44.10 Councillor Simon Barrett asked for clarification of the nett figure of CIFCO returns to the council which appeared in the Overview and Scrutiny report.
- 44.11 Katherine Steel stated she would check the figures in the report and amend if necessary.

It was RESOLVED that the following be recommended to Council:-

- 1. That the Treasury Management activity for the year 2020/21 be noted. Further, that it be noted that performance was in line with the Prudential Indicators set for 2020/21.**
- 2. That it be noted that both Councils treasury management activity for 2020/21 was in accordance with the approved Treasury Management Strategy, and that the Councils have complied with all the Treasury Management Indicators for this period.**

45 JAC/21/3 COMPLAINTS MONITORING REPORT

- 45.1 Emily Yule – Monitoring Officer introduced report JAC/21/3 which gave an update on Code of Conduct complaints received since the last report.
- 45.2 Councillor McLaren asked how soon councillors were advised if a complaint had been received against them.
- 45.3 The Monitoring Officer replied that normally the councillor would be advised of the complaint after the initial assessment which could take up to four weeks.
- 45.4 The Monitoring Officer explained what works were carried out as part of the initial assessment.
- 45.5 Councillor McLaren enquired if the complaints received for Babergh were made by members of the public or other councillors.
- 45.6 The Monitoring Officer stated that complaints around registers of interests were made by members of the public and the others were made by councillors.
- 45.7 Councillor McLaren asked if a councillor was advised to discontinue any disrespectful behaviour but continued to behave in that way what would happen next.
- 45.8 The Monitoring Officer replied that only recommendations could be made not enforceable sanctions. However, if recommendations were made after a councillor has been found in breach of the code and the councillor failed to follow those recommendations a standards committee could be convened where further sanctions could be imposed.
- 45.9 Councillor McLaren asked when an apology is advised what assurances can be given that an apology is made.
- 45.10 The Monitoring Officer replied that at a District level it was the responsibility of the Monitoring Officer and at the Parish level it would be the responsibility of the Parish Clerk.

- 45.11 Councillor McLaren enquired what would happen if a complaint had been received regarding a non-disclosure of an interest at a Parish Council.
- 45.12 The Monitoring Officer stated that it was a requirement at all tiers of government to declare interests and explained the difference between non declaration of non-pecuniary or pecuniary interests.
- 45.13 Councillor Ekpenyong asked about the recommendation to go to an annual reporting cycle and what the annual report would contain.
- 45.14 The Monitoring Officer replied that it was the intention that an annual report would give a much richer set of information to the Committee including more analysis of the trends and types of complaints, where the complaint has come from and the complete life cycle of the complaint.
- 45.15 Councillor Amorowson asked if an apology for misconduct could be made privately.
- 45.16 The Monitoring Officer stated that depending on the nature of the complaint it could be made privately.
- 45.17 Councillor Hurren asked if the monitoring officer could elaborate on the 10 complaints received for Babergh and if it was relating to one issue or more widely spread.
- 45.18 The Monitoring Officer reported that there was a split between District and Parish Councils and that complaints regarding District Councillors tended to be individual and complaints received against Parish Councillors tend to be multiple complaints around the same issue.
- 45.19 Councillor Hurren questioned if now was the time to move to an annual report and expressed his wish to have an annual report in addition to the current reporting.
- 45.20 Councillor McLaren supported Councillor Hurren's wish to have an additional annual report.
- 45.21 Councillor Muller suggested amending the recommendation to reflect the committees wish to continue to receive the current quarterly reports in addition to a more detailed annual report.
- 45.22 The amended recommendation was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Ekpenyong and **SECONDED** by Councillor Barrett.

It was RESOLVED:-

- 1. That the Code of Conduct Complaints monitoring information contained in Paper JAC/21/3 be noted.**

2. That the Code of Conduct Complaints Monitoring Report be reported to Joint Audit Standards Committee in more detail on an annual basis in addition to the current reporting schedule.
3. That the Committee outlines any further information that should be included in the Annual Report.

46 JAC/21/4 FORWARD PLAN

46.1 There were no changes or comments made.

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Chair