

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE JOINT AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, CORKS LANE, HADLEIGH ON
FRIDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2017

PRESENT: Frank Lawrenson - Chairman

Babergh	Mid Suffolk
Sue Burgoyne	Michael Burke
Tom Burrows	John Levantis
Michael Creffield	John Matthissen
Alastair McCraw	Lesley Mayes
Stephen Williams	Suzi Morley
	Dave Muller
	Mike Norris
	Kevin Welsby

William Shropshire was unable to be present.

John Whitehead and Elizabeth Gibson-Harries were in attendance at the meeting.

11 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None declared.

12 JAC/17/5 - TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JULY 2017

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2017 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

13 PETITIONS

None received.

14 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

None received.

15 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

Question from Councillor John Matthissen to the Chairman of the Joint Audit and Standards Committee

Why are the accounts of the two sovereign councils being considered by a combined, Joint meeting?

Answer

Both Councils decided to establish a single Joint Audit and Standards Committee when the constitution was adopted in April 2017, therefore this is the only route for this item to be agreed. The way that this will work in practice is that the questioning and debate will be done jointly then each set of councillors will vote on the recommendation specific to the council they are elected to i.e. MSDC members will agree the MSDC accounts and BDC members will agree the BDC accounts.

Supplementary Question

Could further thought be given to having separate Audit Committees in future?

Answer

We will see how it goes today with the joint arrangements.

16

JAC/17/6 STATEMENTS OF ACCOUNTS 2016/17 AND AUDITOR'S REPORT

The Chairman of the Committee, Frank Lawrenson, outlined how he proposed to take consideration of Paper JAC/17/6 to ensure that all Members had the opportunity to ask questions on matters of specific relevance to each individual Council, and on those issues common to both, with separate votes to be taken by Babergh Members (on Recommendation 2.2) and Mid Suffolk Members (on Recommendation 2.3).

He then asked Katherine Steel, Assistant Director – Corporate Resources to introduce the report and an Update was circulated to those present covering changes to the Statement of Accounts for each of the two Councils. She outlined the reasons for the changes as set out in the Update, a copy of which is attached to these Minutes.

Suresh Patel from the Councils' External Auditor, Ernst and Young, together with Melanie Richardson, then introduced the Auditor's Joint Report for 2016/17 (Appendix A to Paper JAC/17/6) which gave a clean opinion with no matters to report. There were no questions for the Auditor and Recommendation 2.1, to approve the joint report, was accepted.

Members then asked questions about matters common to both Councils, including the format of the accounts and the requirements for the way in which they were presented, which the Officers confirmed were in the legally prescribed form. It was suggested that appropriate training might help to address some of the queries raised, and it was also agreed that the Assistant Director will look at the possibility of providing a covering explanation in a more user-friendly form. In this connection Councillor Burke offered to provide an example of an alternative format.

In response to a request for Members to be provided with more information about the income from the Councils' investments, the Assistant Director referred to the Treasury Management report to be presented to the next meeting of the Committee which will contain a breakdown of the various elements and should provide the necessary level of detail.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Joint External Auditor's Report for 2016/17, as set out in Appendix A to Paper JAC/17/6 be approved.
- (2) That the Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 for Babergh District Council as set out in Appendix B, **as amended**, which has been produced following the completion of the audit be approved.
(Note – only the six Babergh Members voting, all in favour)
- (3) That the Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 for Mid Suffolk District Council as set out in Appendix C, **as amended**, which has been produced following the completion of the audit be approved.
(Note – only the eight Mid Suffolk Members voting, all in favour)

17 JAC/17/7 CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS MONITORING REPORT

John Snell, Deputy Monitoring Officer, introduced Paper JAC/17/7 which reported on Code of Conduct complaints received or determined since the previous report to Committee. Members were aware that any severe complaints would be drawn specifically to their attention.

RESOLVED

That the contents of Paper JAC/17/7 be noted.

18 JAC/17/8 FORWARD PLAN

Members had before them Paper JAC/17/8, which was updated at the meeting by the inclusion of the Annual Audit letter (November 2017) and the Annual Audit Plan 2017/18 (January 2018). It was confirmed that it is the Internal Audit Plan which will be considered at the January 2018 meeting. Members were reminded of the earlier deadlines which will apply to the 2017/18 Statement of accounts, with the need for the Related Party Transaction forms, completed by Members and senior staff, to be returned promptly after the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED

That Paper JAC/17/7 as updated above be noted.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 3.55 p.m.

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Chairman