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GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting held on Thursday 20 September 2018 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Matlock at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Jacquie Stevens - In the Chair

Councillors Deborah Botham, Ann Elliott, Helen Froggatt, Chris Furness, Alyson Hill, Susan Hobson, Neil Horton, Angus Jenkins, Jean Monks, Mike Ratcliffe, Mark Salt, Colin Swindell, John Tibenham and Joanne Wild.

Paul Wilson (Chief Executive), Karen Henriksen (Head of Resources), Jenny Williams (Internal Audit Consortium Manager), Mark Nash (Financial Services Manager), Jim Fearn (Communications and Marketing Manager) and Jackie Cullen (Committee Assistant).

John Pressley, Audit Manager, Mazars LLP (External Auditor).

Councillor Joyce Pawley – Member Representative of the Communications & Marketing Hub

The Chairman welcomed Mr John Pressley, Audit Manager, Mazars LLP as the Council's new external auditor.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Albert Catt, Tom Donnelly, Steve Flitter, Garry Purdy and Lewis Rose OBE. Councillors Ann Elliott, Helen Froggatt and Susan Hobson attended as Substitute Members.

138/18 – MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor Jacquie Stevens, seconded by Councillor Mike Ratcliffe and

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of the Governance and Finance Committee held on 19 July 2018 be approved as a correct record.
(unanimously)

The Minutes were signed by the Chairman.

139/18 – QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO RULE OF PROCEDURE NUMBER 15

Councillor Mike Ratcliffe asked the following question of Councillor Jacquie Stevens, Chair of the Governance & Resources Committee:

“I broadly welcome the new Communications & Marketing Strategy. Clear and open two-way communication is essential for maintaining good public relations. However given the level of frustration and annoyance exhibited by residents towards recent DDDC consultations, will the chair of this committee call for a more in-depth review of how District Council Consultations are formulated and carried out; one that listens to the views and opinions of residents, members and officers?”

Councillor Jacquie Stevens gave the following response:

I am sure that Councillor Ratcliffe is aware that the District Council’s Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2014-2019 describes the purpose, principles and priorities in respect of consultation and engagement activity undertaken by the District Council.

Each year the District Council prepares an Equality, Consultation and Engagement Plan which sets out the activity planned for the coming year in line with the strategy’s objectives. The most recent was approved by this committee on the 14 June.

In common with most other local authorities and Government Departments, the District Council uses a variety of approaches in order to engage with our residents.

These include:

- Website homepage news slider
- E-newsletter (over 2000 subscribers)
- Press release to all local media including coverage on Derbyshire Live website and social media channels
- Facebook post (currently over 18,000 people reached)
- Twitter posts

Press releases issued by the District Council don’t only go to local and regional media outlets; we also hit village blogs and newsletters, where they have provided their details.

I believe that we are all aware that Resources to carry out consultation are limited. Whereas 10 years ago the Council had a full-time consultation officer and paid for surveys, now we only have 0.2 of a full time consultation post and most surveys are carried out at no cost. This is a reflection of diminishing resources in local authorities over that period, but it also reflects the rise of the internet and the move towards digital by default consultations.

Whilst we do use the internet for surveys (at no or low cost), this is far from the only means of consultation that the District Council uses. We also hold regular Area Community Forums and Parish and Town Council conferences, to engage directly with local communities and their representatives. We hold focus groups on specific topics (e.g. the Corporate Plan), and we still write directly to individuals affected by specific proposals (e.g. the discretionary rate relief policy).

The business community in the Derbyshire Dales can be hard to reach, so we recently held the first business breakfast for Chief Executives of our largest employers.

What Cllr Ratcliffe says about residents exhibiting frustration at consultation is true in isolated cases, but overall the facts do not bear this out.

The recent waste consultation, which has been undertaken by the District Council and is possibly the root of your question, has been published extensively and so far has resulted in over 2,000 responses being received which is the highest number yet achieved since we started using Survey Monkey back in 2015.

As a comparison, it exceeds the responses received to highly emotive subjects such as the Local Plan (573), public conveniences (672) and the car parking review (1434). An open online survey response of this magnitude i.e. in excess of 2000 is therefore an excellent response.

As a Council, we need to acknowledge that we can't force the unengaged to become engaged, any more than we can force someone to sign up for one of our e-newsletters. It's a choice, and the fact that some residents haven't completed the waste questionnaire does not mean that they haven't seen it publicised. It could be that they are simply apathetic (or perhaps too busy).

I acknowledge that there will be a large proportion of our residents who are not engaged with social media, do not purchase the local newspapers and are perhaps not engaged in local affairs. However, Ward Members also have a role to play in disseminating information through their own communication channels. This is a collective responsibility and we all need to contribute in order to make sure it is effective.

With regard to listening to the views and opinions of members and officers, I believe that we are already doing this. In addition to consulting we now hold Councillor Briefings and Workshops on important issues such as the outsourcing of leisure service management before we have to reach a decision. We now have dates scheduled for Briefings and workshops to take place to discuss the way forward with regard to the Waste contract.

I therefore consider that the consultation we do is fit for purpose, given the resources available, and does not require an in-depth review.

Cllr Stevens also advised the Committee that since preparing her response, the number of responses to the Waste consultation had risen from 2,000 to approximately 2,400.

140/18 – ANTI-FRAUD, BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY (INCLUDING MONEY LAUNDERING)

The Committee considered a draft updated Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy (including Money Laundering Policy) which was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The strategy that had been recommended for adoption had been reviewed and updated in accordance with good practice for all public bodies, and it was noted that the main change in the document was to reflect the requirements of The Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (information on the payer) Regulations 2017. If there were further legislative or changes in best practice then the strategy would be reviewed accordingly.

In response to questions from Members regarding failure of the public to disclose suspected fraud, and whether this itself was a crime, the Head of Resources said she would refer the matter to the Benefits Manager and would bring a report back to a future meeting of this committee.

It was moved by Councillor Mike Ratcliffe, seconded by Councillor Swindell and

RESOLVED That the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy (including Money (unanimously) Laundering Policy) attached at Appendix 1 to the report is approved.

141/18 – INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS CONCLUDED UNDER THE 2018/2019 OPERATIONAL AUDIT PLAN

The Committee was asked to consider the internal audit reports produced in respect of the 2018/2019 Internal Audit Plan, approved by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governance and Resources Committee on 1st March 2018 (meeting cancelled due to snow).

Reports were issued as Drafts with five working days being allowed for the submission of any factual changes, after which time the report was designated as a Final Report. Fifteen working days were allowed for the return of the Implementation Plan.

Appendix 1 to the report showed for each report a summary of the level of assurance that could be given in respect of the audit area examined and the number of recommendations made / agreed where a full response had been received. The overall assessment of the assurance that could be given in terms of the controls in place and the system's ability to meet its objectives and manage risk was given in accordance with the classifications set out in the report.

It was noted that 3 reports had been issued, all with a conclusion of "Substantial Assurance"; 2 medium and 2 low priority recommendations had been made within the reports and subsequently accepted by management. No issues of fraud had been identified.

It was moved by Councillor Chris Furness, seconded by Councillor Mike Ratcliffe and

RESOLVED That the findings and conclusions of the internal audit reviews that (unanimously) have taken place this period are noted.

142/18 - COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING STRATEGY

The Committee considered a report that set out how residents, employees and service users were kept informed about what the District Council was doing; how it was spending public money; and the District Council services that could be accessed.

The adopted Strategy, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, set out a multi-channel approach to reach a wide variety of customers and stakeholders, underlining traditional forms of communication while embracing more modern approaches in accordance with the aims listed in the report. It was felt however that an additional paragraph should be added to the Strategy this year, setting out clearly that surveys and questionnaires supporting the council's consultations with residents, businesses and other stakeholders would be digital by default, although paper versions of online surveys and questionnaires could be made available on request. Consultations would continue to be promoted using a combination of

digital and traditional media and, where timing allowed, through the twice-yearly Dales Matters residents' newsletter.

A review of the 2017/18 action plan was set out in the report, and it was reported that 9 of the Council's 16 new boundary welcome signs were now sponsored by local businesses on a two-year basis, bringing in £10,190 sponsorship income against an original outlay of £2,785. New signs had been ordered for the Council's 30 smaller parks and gardens; new external signage at the Town Hall was now complete; 100 bench plaques had been installed in the larger parks, and new temporary signs had been designed in-house for use during this year's Matlock Bath Illuminations, creating a specific high quality corporate identity for the event.

The focus for the Action Plan 2018/19 was once again to allocate a sum from the communications budget set aside annually to improve the reputation of the District Council, as set out in the report. The Communications & Marketing Hub had agreed that in the coming year the Council needed to continue to address the issue of signage in a third phase, as detailed in the report. The full Action Plan was outlined in the report.

It was moved by Councillor Mike Ratcliffe, seconded by Councillor Susan Hobson and

- RESOLVED**
(unanimously)
1. That the strategic framework of the current Communications and Marketing Strategy is noted;
 2. That the addition of a paragraph in the Communications and Marketing Strategy is approved (paragraph 1.7 of the report), setting out the District Council's digital-by-default approach to surveys and questionnaires that support consultations with residents, businesses and other stakeholders;
 3. That the action plan for 2018/2019 is approved.

143/18 – REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER 1 2018/19

The Committee considered a report that summarised the Council's forecast outturn position as at the end of June 2018, in line with a response to recommendations made by both internal and external audit for the Council to increase the frequency of reporting budget monitoring to Councillors.

On 5th March 2018 Council set a total revenue budget of £10,306,550. The full year forecast to March 2019 based on initial monitoring and identification of major variances was tabled in the report. This projected an underspend of £55,000 with the major variances (as described in the report) and other smaller variances currently offsetting each other. All budgets would be revisited in detail and revised at quarter 2.

It was moved by Councillor Chris Furness, seconded by Councillor Jean Monks and

- RESOLVED**
(unanimously)
- That the identified variances and current overall forecast position are noted.

144/18 – RISK MANAGEMENT – CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S ANNUAL REPORT & UPDATED RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY

The Committee considered an update for approval on the Council’s [Risk Management Policy and Strategy](#), approved by this Committee in September 2016.

The first part of the report covered the Chief Executive’s Annual Report, which described the current risk management processes and working practices. The report illustrated the strategic risks and scored them as high (red), medium (yellow) or low (green), and showed the actions that were planned to mitigate or reduce the risks.

The second part of the report recommended an updated Policy and Strategy for Members’ approval. Revisions to the document reflected the current organisation structure, processes and procedures.

The Council’s recent developments and achievements in connection with ongoing risk management activities were set out in the third and final part of the report. The current Strategic Risks considered by relevant officers and documented within the Strategic Risk Register were identified and reported to the Corporate Leadership team in June 2018, and were reproduced in the chart at paragraph 1.4.1 of the report. A comparison of current risks with the chart shown in last year’s report showed an improved situation with fewer high risks, as illustrated in the table at paragraph 1.4.2 of the report.

Service managers and the Risk Continuity Group had identified that further mitigating actions were required in order to further mitigate strategic risks and reduce the Council’s risk profile, as set out in paragraph 1.5 of the report.

It was moved by Councillor Angus Jenkins, seconded by Councillor Colin Swindell and

- RESOLVED** (unanimously)
1. That the report and risk management arrangements be approved.
 2. That the Risk Management Strategy and Policy 2018 – 2020 be approved.

145/18 – COMPLAINTS MONITORING

Councillor Angus Jenkins left the meeting at 7.16pm during discussion of this item.

The Committee considered a report that provided information on: formal complaints made under the District Council’s internal Complaints Procedures; those referred to the Local Government Ombudsman; and against individual elected member behaviour at town, parish and District Council level.

During 2017/18 the District Council received 61 official complaints, compared to 45 in the previous year. The number of complaints by service area compared to the previous year was tabled in paragraph 1.1 of the report. Of particular note was the increase in complaints regarding car parking and development management, as set out in the report.

It was noted that 11 complaints were referred to the Chief Executive for review during the year, which was an increase of 4 from the previous year. Those Complainants who remained dissatisfied with the handling of their complaint following the final stage of the

internal complaints procedure could take their issue up with the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). The LGO's annual review letter was attached at Appendix 2 to the report and showed that 2 complaints relating to the District Council were received during this period, and 8 decisions were issued which were summarised in paragraph 2 of the report. It was noted that no findings were made against the District Council, which was a significant achievement.

The monitoring officer received 2 complaints about individual member behaviour during 2017/18, which under the provisions of the localism act were required to be assessed against agreed criteria and the relevant authority's code of conduct, in consultation with the independent person. The assessment procedure was outlined in the report, and the complaints received and outcomes in 2017/18 were tabled in paragraph 3.4 of the report.

The Confidential Reporting Policy, or Whistleblowing Policy, required the Monitoring Officer to report to the Committee periodically on matters referred to her under the terms of the Policy. No matters were referred under the policy in 2017/18.

It was moved by Councillor Chris Furness, seconded by Councillor Colin Swindell and

RESOLVED That the report is noted.
(unanimously)

146/18 – EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was moved by Councillor Jackie Stevens, seconded by Councillor Colin Swindell and

RESOLVED That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining item of business to avoid disclosure of exempt information.
(unanimously)

147/18 – ARREARS FOR WRITE-OFF

The Committee considered a report that provided information about debtor write offs authorised by the Head of Resources under delegated authority and that sought approval for the write off of individual debts exceeding £1,500 in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

The Governance and Resources committee agreed in July 2018 that a report on arrears for write off would be presented to this committee twice a year. This was the first report for 2018/19.

It was reported that the debts detailed in the report had been pursued through all appropriate methods of recovery open to the Council and were now referred to this Committee for authorisation to write them off. It was noted that any debt would be reinstated where further information subsequently came to light that allowed further recovery action to be pursued.

The amounts recommended for write-off were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report and summarised in the body of the report.

It was moved by Councillor Colin Swindell, seconded by Councillor Chris Furness and

RESOLVED That the individual amounts exceeding £1,500 listed in Appendix 1 to
(unanimously) the report totalling £77,478.31 be written off.

MEETING CLOSED – 7.33PM

CHAIRMAN