

GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 1 June 2021

Present:

Councillor Pauline Tunnicliffe (Chairman)
Councillor Michael Turner (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Gareth Allatt, Nicholas Bennett MA J.P.,
Mark Brock, Robert Evans, Kira Gabbert, Colin Hitchins,
Josh King, Alexa Michael, Neil Reddin FCCA,
Melanie Stevens, Harry Stranger, Ryan Thomson and
Stephen Wells

153 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no apologies for absence; the Chairman welcomed new and returning Members to the Committee.

154 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made in relation to minute 157 (Appointments to Outside Bodies 2021/22) –

Councillors Nicholas Bennett and Alexa Michael declared that they had Mytime passes.

Councillor Colin Hitchins declared that he was an employee of Biggin Hill Airport Limited.

155 QUESTIONS

No questions had been submitted.

156 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 23 MARCH AND 19 MAY 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 23 March and 19 May 2021, excluding exempt information, be confirmed.

157 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2021/22 Report CSD21050

The Committee received a report setting out the nominations for appointments to outside bodies for 2021/21 received from the party groups.

RESOLVED that the nominations to outside bodies set out in Appendix 1 to the minutes be approved.

158 WORK PROGRAMME AND MATTERS ARISING
Report CSD21049

The Committee considered its draft work programme for the 2021/22 Council year, and discussed the following matters –

- It was noted that there would be a review of the 2021 GLA election at the September meeting. It was suggested that the report needed to address the issue of the use of school premises as polling stations.
- The report from Executive Assistants was, historically, submitted to the Committee's February meeting to be considered along-side the Members' Allowances Scheme. It was suggested that this should be moved to the March meeting as this was nearer to the end of the Council year.
- There would be a report to the next meeting on 6th July on arrangements for committee meetings – this would cover livestreaming.
- It was suggested that the Committee should consider whether Audit Sub-Committee should become a Committee in its own right, as with the Pensions Committee.
- The Committee requested that a Licensing training/update presentation be arranged for their next meeting.

The Committee also received an update from David Dobbs, Head of Corporate Finance and Accounting, on the current position with regard to the audit of the Council's accounts.

Objections to the 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 accounts had been made by one resident. These objections largely concerned the waste disposal contract, but also referred to utilisation of property on the Civic Centre site for the 2018/19 accounts. The objections were lengthy and detailed. The situation was further complicated by the change in external auditor from KPMG to EY for 2018/19 onwards. The accounts for these three years had been completed but could not be signed off in full until the external auditors had finished their investigations into the objections. Officers had pressed for a speedy resolution of the issues, and KPMG had now engaged specialist legal advisors.

For the 2018/19 accounts, EY had found errors in the property valuations carried out by Cushman and Wakefield. Consequently, new valuations had been carried out by Montagu Evans and the accounts had been completed. However, during the audit of the 2019/20 accounts EY Real Estate had queried the methodology used by Montagu Evans in relation to the treatment of investment properties, which were re-valued annually on a market value

basis, and Montagu Evans had been asked to re-value these properties. The deadline for completing the 2019/20 accounts was 31st October 2020; many Councils had missed the deadline due to similar issues with valuations – it was recognised that this was a national issue. The Council's Finance Team were currently working on the 2020/21 accounts – the statutory deadline for publication of the draft accounts was 31st July 2021.

In response to questions, Mr Dobbs explained that the options for the external auditor in relation to objections to the accounts were to take no action, to issue a report with recommendations or a public interest report, which would incur adverse publicity for the Council. The expected outcome was a report, but investigations were still on-going and could take many months to resolve. Officers would continue to press for the issues to be dealt with as quickly as possible – if changes were required to the numbers in the earlier accounts these changes would need to be worked through in subsequent accounts, though this was thought to be unlikely. The issues raised in relation to the Montagu Evans valuations were less serious than with the original Cushman and Wakefield valuations, and centred on detailed interpretation of the CIPFA Guidance.

There was further discussion in part 2.

The Chairman thanked Mr Dobbs for his clear and thorough explanation of the issues.

RESOLVED that the work programme and the situation with the Council's accounts be noted.

159 AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 MARCH 2021, EXCLUDING EXEMPT INFORMATION

The minutes of the Audit Sub-Committee's meeting on 9th March 2021 were received.

160 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006 AND THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

RESOLVED that the Press and public be excluded during consideration of the item of business referred to below as it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the Press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.

**The following summaries
refer to matters involving exempt information**

161 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 MARCH 2021

The exempt minutes of the Committee's meeting on 23 March 2021 were confirmed.

162 WORK PROGRAMME AND MATTERS ARISING

The Committee continued its consideration of issues relating to the audit of accounts.

163 AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE: EXEMPT MINUTES - 9 MARCH 2021

The exempt minutes of the Audit Sub-Committee's meeting on 9th March 2021 were received.

The Meeting ended at 7.55 pm

Chairman