

**A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND ORGANISATION BOARD
WAS HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2020**

Councillors Mrs Huggins (Substituting for Murphy), Ms Ballard, Bateman, Burgess, Chegwyn, Mrs Cully, Herridge, Hook, Mrs Hook, Hylands, Jessop, Philpott, Mrs Prickett and Raffaelli

PART II

32. CITIZEN'S ADVICE PRESENTATION

A presentation was given by the CO and CEO of Citizen's Advice Gosport.

33. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER ELECTIONS

Consideration was given to a report of the Returning Officer and the Electoral Registration Officer advising the Board of the steps being taken in preparation for the 'triple' elections being held on Thursday, 06 May 2021 in the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Members were advised that the date in paragraph 2.6.1 needed to be amended to the 8th May.

In answer to a Member's question, the Board was advised that consideration was being given to the nomination process and returning officers and political parties had been written to with an update by the Electoral Commission. It was anticipated that political parties would produce their own guidance for candidates to consider when obtaining signatures for nomination papers.

The Board was advised that under the Representation of the people act the Returning Officer already had power to make changes to polling station in emergency situations before an election. Members expressed concern that any late changes may not be advised to the electorate, however it was felt Council staff would do their best to ensure electors were notified at the earliest opportunity.

In answer to a Member's question, the Board was advised that with regard to the campaign material in relation to elections, there was information available online, but there would not be any television advertising as it was felt it was too soon to use such an approach and these would begin in March and April.

The Board were advised that once the Register of Electors had been published on 01 December 2020 the social media campaign and information about the elections would be used through the Council's platforms.

The Board was advised that with regard to staffing, the current covid safe workplace requirements meant there would be a need for more sessions for issuing and opening postal votes, and that a timetable/slot for each Electoral Ward would be published to help reduce the total number present in the Postal Vote venue. In addition, as this will be a triple election, there would be three different counts, requiring additional staff roles.

The Board was advised that the extensions requested to emergency provision were only to cover the covid pandemic and once that period was over, the delegated powers would expire.

Members welcomed that consideration was being given to potential issues in advance of the election.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Board note the changes necessary to ensure a safe and efficient run Poll during the Covid-19 pandemic;
2. That the Board note that more changes and amendments may be required to the current planning and procedures based on national, regional or local restrictions placed on the Returning Officer, his appointed staff, electors, candidates, agents and observers; and that
3. That authority be delegated to the Returning Officer to make changes to the Polling Places required for use in these and future Polls whilst the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic response is in effect.

34. RIPA POLICY - CROSS REFERENCE FROM THE STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to a cross reference report from the Standards and Governance Committee recommended the approval of the RIPA policy.

In answer to a Member's question, the Board was advised that the principle reason for review was a change in the authorised officers.

The Board were advised that RIPA had been used once in 3 years.

RESOLVED: That the Policy and Organisation Board approve the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) Policy 2020 subject to the minor amendments identified.

35. RISK POLICY - CROSS REFERENCE FROM THE STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to a cross reference report from the Standards and Governance Committee recommending the Policy and Organisation Board approve the Risk Policy. In answer a Members question the Board was advised that a balanced approach was taken, and that risk could be considered as an opportunity and encourage officers to see it that way.

RESOLVED: That that Policy and Organisation Board approve the Risk Policy

36. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2019/20

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Internal Auditor requesting consideration be given to the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20.

The Board was advised that the Committee agreed the Statement in July and was required to be signed before the accounts were agreed. The only changes made were detailed at the end of the report as Governance Issues 1, 4 and 5 had now been completed.

RESOLVED: That the Policy and Organisation Board approve the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20, following the approval from the Standards and Governance Committee on July 9th 2020.

37. ERNST & YOUNG 2019-2020 AUDIT RESULTS REPORT

Consideration was given to a report of the External Auditor summarises the findings to date from the 2019-20 external audit, which was substantially complete.

The Board was advised that there were updates as those procedures marked work in progress were now completed, particularly regarding property valuation work.

Work had been heavily impacted by Covid-19 as the audit had to be conducted remotely, and it impacted the issues that needed reviewing to ensure the Council's accounting was considering the additional measures that needed to be undertaken as a result of the virus. Additional information would be requested over how Covid would impact Council finances this and the next financial years.

It was particularly noted that the work on property values had been impacted as there had been a potential for a change as a result of Covid. The work on it was now substantially completed.

The External Auditors thanked the Council's finance team for the work they had undertaken at this difficult time.

The remaining concluding procedures were also now substantially complete and the management representation letter would be signed after the meeting.

The risk report highlighted the risks identified in the audit plan and the audit plan update which was submitted in light of Covid-19 were detailed to the Board but were now completed and no indications of fraud were highlighted.

The Board were advised that specialists had considered the investment property valuations and that necessary adjustments had been made. In addition, land and buildings had been considered and the work on these was now substantially complete, with adjustments made where discrepancies were identified.

The Board was advised that the deadlines for the signing off the accounts for the Council would be met and would undertaken after approval of the Audit Results and Statement of Accounts, The deadline had been amended as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and that

the fees played were significantly less than previously paid and in line with the Redmond review. Any delays were reflected across all Councils as a result of Covid.

RESOLVED: That the Board review and note to the conclusions to date set out in the Audit Results Report.

38. APPROVAL OF THE 2019-2020 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer summarises the outturn position for the 2019/20 financial year and recommends the approval of the Statement of Accounts for 2019/20.

The Head of Finance advised the Board of the context of the report.

RESOLVED:

It is recommended that:

- i) The Board note the outturn position summarised in the report and the Narrative Report contained in the Statement of Accounts (Appendix A)
- ii) The Board approves the Statement of Accounts for 2019/20 at Appendix A
- iii) The Board approve the Letter of Representation at Appendix B
- iv) The Board delegate to the Borough Treasurer in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy & Organisation Board the decision to agree any final changes to the financial statement arising from the completion of the audit.

39. ANY OTHER ITEMS

There were none.

40. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That in relation to the following items the public be excluded from the meeting, 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 public were present during these items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and further that in all circumstances of the cases, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons set out in the report.

41. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE MACHINERY TENDER

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Consideration was given to a cross reference report from their Community Board recommending approval of the recommendation of the award of contracts as listed.

CHAIRMAN

Concluded at 7.47 pm