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Standards & Audit Sub Board

16 November 2023

A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS & AUDIT SUB BOARD WAS HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2023

Councillors Mrs Cully, Hutchison, Hylands, Pepper and Raffaelli

65. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

There were none

66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none

67. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SUB BOARD HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 21 September 2023 were signed as a true and correct record.

Following a question from a Member, the CIA (Chief Internal Auditor) agreed to circulate a potential timetable for bringing the Risk Register to the Sub Board.

68. DEPUTATIONS- STANDING ORDER 3.4

There were none

69. PUBLIC QUESTIONS - STANDING ORDER 3.5

There were none

70. AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Consideration was given to a report by the Chief Internal Auditor (CIA) updating the sub board on the progress of the Audit Plan 2023/24.

The CIA advised that this was the standard report, which showed the picture up to the end of October. Members were advised that good progress had been made, and the assignments were on course to be completed on time, and any potential delays were explained in the report.

The CIA pointed out that the planned Recruitment and Retention audit had been taken out, and a Health & Safety audit put in, although it would be risk assessed and potentially added to the next cycle.

In answer to a Members question, the CIA explained that although the Emergency Planning- Corporate audit had probably been completed, it would not be followed up until the next financial year.

Members were advised that the data in the IT Helpdesk-IT audit only applied to the performance of the helpdesk and not across the board.

RESOLVED: That the Standards and Audit Sub Board noted the progress of the Audit Plan 2023/24 from April 1st to 27th October 2023.

71. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report by the Chief Executive advising the Sub Board of the Annual Review Letter 2023 received from the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Chief Executive advised Members that the only action required by the Ombudsman for the whole year was to include a policy on the website.

Members were pleased to see how well Gosport fared against other local authorities, and felt that the complaints department must have a good handle on the process. They were advised that the process is being considered to see if more can be resolved at stage 1.

RESOLVED: That the Sub Board noted the report

72. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION PERFORMANCE JULY 1ST 2022- JUNE 30TH 2023

Consideration was given to a report by the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer (BSMO) reporting the performance of the Freedom of Information request process.

The BSMO drew the Members attention to the low number of requests that are refused, ensuring transparency of information, the decrease in the turnaround time and the number of requests that originate from companies wanting information to help with sales enquiries.

Members recognised the importance of good management at the beginning of the process to ensure early identification of who is best placed to answer, and to monitor progress which may include chasing section heads to ensure a prompt response.

Members advised that they would like to see details of any requests that resulted in an internal review, and maybe a flavour of the most requested topics of information be included in future reports.

RESOLVED: That the Sub Board noted the report

73. REVIEW OF CODE OF CONDUCT

Consideration was given to a report by the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer (BSMO) setting out the need for the Council to review its Code of Conduct for Members and Arrangements for Dealing with Allegations of Breaches of the Code of Conduct.

The BSMO advised that he felt the Code was working reasonably well, certainly compared to other local authorities and could see no requirement at this time to change or update.

In answer to a Member's question, the BSMO advised that the process is very limited in what can be applied in terms of sanctions and the Sub Board discussed a range of potential outcomes including publication of the outcomes.

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Members felt that the political groups could impose more appropriate and effective sanctions.

Members agreed to discuss this subject further at the next meeting with the possibility of setting up a group to explore the options.

RESOLVED: That the Sub Board noted the report.

74. ANY OTHER ITEMS

CHAIRMAN

Concluded at 6.53 pm

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