

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

(MEETING JOINTLY IN PART WITH THE AUDIT COMMITTEE)

MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 25 September 2013

Time: 6.00 p.m.

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Mrs J Lloyd (Chair), G Clark, J Mead, H Tessier, and S Walker.

Started: 6.00 p.m.

Ended: 7.35 p.m.

1. APPOINTMENT OF PERSON TO PRESIDE

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Mrs J Lloyd be appointed to preside at that part of the meeting held jointly with Audit Committee.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

An apology for absence was received from Councillor G Snell.

There were no declarations of interest.

3. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2012/13 AND EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S AUDIT FINDINGS REPORT FOR THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE.

The Audit Committee and the Statement of Accounts Committee meeting jointly received a presentation from the Accountancy Services Manager on the Statement of Accounts 2013 and a report on the External Auditor's Audit Findings from the Council's Auditors, Grant Thornton.

The Committees were shown how the Council's accounts were constructed, with key points highlighted and identified and major variances against forecasts explained.

The Committees were advised that the Council's usable reserves had increased by £6.3 million during the year, whilst the unusable reserve had dropped by £10.5 million, due largely to a revaluation of the Pensions Reserve.

Members asked a number of detailed questions relating to the New Homes Bonus; variations in bank balances year on year; pension fund valuations; insurance; the valuation of Heritage Assets and depreciation which were answered by the Officer.

In reply to a question concerning the Housing Revenue Account Income Variance the Strategic Director (Resources) undertook to reply directly to Committee Members.

The Council's Auditor's advised the Committees that it would issue an 'unqualified' opinion for the Council's financial statements and Value for Money conclusion. It was clarified that 'unqualified' in this case meant that it was a positive outcome. It was also confirmed that no material errors had been found in the Council's accounts.

The Council's Auditors further advised that issues raised in relation to the controls of IT systems had been responded to by the Council.

The Chairman expressed thanks on behalf of both Committees to Anita Thomas and her team for their work in preparing the accounts.

At 19.15 hrs. it was **RESOLVED** that the Statement of Accounts Committee adjourn until the rise of the Audit Committee.

The Audit Committee continued to complete their agenda

The Statement of Accounts Committee reconvened at 7.25 pm.

The Strategic Director (Resources) and the Accountancy Services Manager advised the Committee of the discussion of the Audit Committee who had requested consistency of terminology in future accounts; an explanation of how expenditure on Shared Services had been accounted for and had asked for feedback on the controls in respect of IT controls but had otherwise expressed no material concerns about the accounts.

In reply to a question it was confirmed that the Accounts had been advertised and that no comments in respect of the Accounts had been received from members of the public.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the External Auditor's Audit Findings report be approved.
2. That the Council's Letter of Representation be approved.
3. That the Financial Report including the Statement of Accounts be approved.

4. That the new accounting policies published in the Statement of Accounts be noted.

4. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

None.

5. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not required.

PART II

6. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

Chair