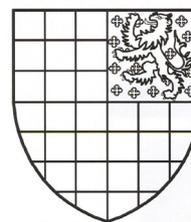


Town Hall
High Street
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 2QS

☎ 01273 471469 Fax: 01273 480919

✉ info@lewes-tc.gov.uk

🌐 www.lewes-tc.gov.uk



**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

of the **Audit & Governance Panel** held on **Monday 27th July 2020**, online via Zoom Meetings at **6:30pm**.

PRESENT Cllrs Bird; Catlin; Lamb; Maples; Milner (*Chairman*). Also (*not appointed to Panel*) Cllr Earl and Cllr Wood

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*)

AudPan2020/01 ELECTION of CHAIR Cllr Milner was elected as Chair of the Panel for the 2020-21 year.

AudPan2020/02 QUESTIONS: The remit of the Panel was discussed. Some Members had assumed that the remit had been extended to include non-financial/governance matters as this had been touched-upon at an earlier meeting. TC advised that no proposal had been made for Council to consider the matter, and the Panel could not assume responsibilities or authority unilaterally. There was a request that the remit be repeated on each Agenda, to assist panellists, and TC would oblige.

AudPan2020/03 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: There were none

AudPan2020/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: There were none.

AudPan2020/05 MINUTES: The minutes of the meeting held on 11th March 2020 were received and signed as an accurate record.

AudPan2020/06 BUSINESS OF THE MEETING:

1. *Routine financial monitoring:* Members were furnished with detailed information (*copies in minute book*) following the end of the first quarter of the financial year.
2. *Budget monitoring update* – this showed actual expenditure and income values as posted to the Council's Sage accounting system for all transactions processed in the period. There was some discussion on salient points of detail, and TC responded with reference to the identified sources.
 - 2.1. There was a general discussion on the apparent reduction in income due to Covid-19. TC explained that the first quarter figures were slightly misleading in that regard, as income for the Town Hall (T/h) and All Saints Centre (ASC) was traditionally much lower in Qtr1 than at other times of year, due to the profile of regular hires. An analysis of the Covid effects would be discussed later in the evening
 - 2.2. It appeared that salary and overhead budgets were underspent, and TC explained that savings had been made principally as expected levels of overtime had not been worked due to Covid-19.
 - 2.3. A question arose regarding the budgeted amount shown at a/c 6412 for "Consultants"; TC explained that this covered a number of expenses including audit fees; data protection service; support service for SAGE accounts and a provision arising from the Visioning exercise. The labels of accounts were very general and arose from an old code system which had been used to structure the Council's accounting system when SAGE was adopted in 2002. Members expressed various opinions on this, and TC stated that the coding was a purely working tool and there was no reason to change. Changes would require significant work to restructure the SAGE system and recasting of accounts for previous years for consistency. The Council's

Responsible Finance Officer determines working practices and the day-to-day documents used.

3. *Oversight as required by the Governance & Accountability Code of Practice:* Due to remote working, TC was unable to show the file of periodic bank reconciliations for review of the scrutiny already conducted. Ordinarily the Chairman would append his signature to verify this, but this could be done in arrears at any point during the year.
4. *Internal Auditor's report for year-ended March 2020:* Members considered the report of the Council's retained Internal Auditor. TC explained that the structure of this was designed to confirm that every element of the statutory audit framework was satisfied and, supported by the routine work of the Panel, was to give Council the confidence that it should affirm each statement on the statutory Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR). Members raised various questions on topics such as frequency of monitoring; the statutory framework; principles of appropriation and other practical issues.
5. *Impact of Covid-19:* TC explained the lost income from Town Hall and All Saints Centre; the partial offset by savings in areas such as staff overtime and consumable stores, and the items of expenditure to facilitate eventual re-opening that were in excess of 'normal' expenses for the period. The nett effect was a cost of £36,000 compared with budgets. In terms of prospects for remobilization, TC had indicated, in a report submitted for the imminent meeting of Council, that the ASC booking diary showed many prospective bookings from September and was almost back to normal levels from the New Year. It was acknowledged that these were not yet confirmed, and the situation was fluid. The regular hirers at the Town Hall were more "institutional" in character and many had already decided to cancel all activity until at least January 2021.

AudPan2020/07 CONCLUSIONS:

1 Members considered information on the Council's financial status and management for the first quarter; and found no items of concern. It was acknowledged that routine bank reconciliations would be validated by physical signature later in the year.

2 Members noted the Internal Auditor's report and signified their understanding of the statements it contained.

AudPan2020/08 There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and declared the meeting closed.

The meeting closed at 8:25pm

Signed date