

# WEST DEVON AUDIT COMMITTEE



West Devon  
Borough  
Council

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **West Devon Audit Committee**  
held on  
**Tuesday, 6th September, 2022 at 12.30 pm** at the **Chamber**  
**- Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

**Chairman** Cllr Ball  
**Vice Chairman** Cllr Davies

Cllr Bridgewater  
Cllr Yelland

Cllr Ridgers

**In attendance:**

Councillors:

Cllr Crozier  
Cllr Jory

Cllr Edmonds  
Cllr Samuel (via Teams)

Officers:

Section 151 Officer  
Director – Place & Enterprise  
Head of Strategy & Projects (via Teams)  
Deputy Section 151 Officer (via Teams)  
Internal Auditor  
External Auditor (via Teams)  
Senior Specialists – Finance (via Teams)  
Democratic Services Officer

6. **Confirmation of Minutes**

\*AC 6

The Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 5 July 2022 were confirmed by the Committee as a true and correct record. Concern was raised at the lack of the membership attending or giving advanced apologies. The Leader confirmed he would send a message out to all Members reminding them of their responsibilities.

7. **Draft Statement of Accounts for 2021-22**

\*AC 7

The Hub Lead Member introduced the report to Members.

The S151 Officer in reply to a Member question, stated that the car parking tariffs had gone up in March 2021, however Covid was still having an impact on revenue. The income from town centre car parks had not fully recovered as expected to pre-Covid levels.

The S151 Officer explained that short term borrowing had gone up due to the debt maturity profile but overall borrowing had gone down. The Head of Strategy and Projects stated that a small amount is made on the lottery with the intention that the money is put back into the community for good causes.

The Vice-Chair asked for it to be noted that the Council was in a solid position and offered thanks to the Finance team. The Section 151 Officer responded to a question on pensions. She also reminded Members that the deficit recovery period had been kept low, to 17 years whereas other councils had a period of 20 or 23 years.

The S151 Officer stated that the Senior Leadership Team would look to close down the dormant company Servaco on 31 March 2023.

A Member asked about the cost of running the census and the S151 Officer confirmed that costs would be recovered from central government.

The 151 Officer was hopeful that the two year finance settlement would happen for 2023/24 and 2024/25. A proposal was recommended and a vote was taken to write to the Secretary Of State regarding the technical consultation on local government finance (including the timing of the Business rate baseline reset), to enable the Council to undertake long term strategic financial planning. The letter would include local MPs.

The S151 Officer agreed to bring a report to the next Audit Committee on earmarked reserves which is taken to the Hub Committee and through the annual budget workshop. She also explained the £196,000 underspend included salary savings due to difficulty in recruiting staff and also in the recovery of housing benefit overpayments. £250,000 of recycling credits and dry recycling income was transferred into the waste reserves. The £600,000 in waste earmarked reserves at 31.March 2022 would in part go towards work needed at the Hayedown depot and an additional vehicle for the waste fleet.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

The Draft Statement of Accounts and the Draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the financial year ended 31 March 2022 were noted.

8. **Update on Progress on the 2022-23 Internal Audit Plan**

\*AC8

The Lead Hub Member introduced the report to the Committee.

The External Auditor answered a question on the leisure report and stated it would be ready for the next meeting.

It was then **RESOLVED** that;

1. The Internal Audit Charter and Strategy was approved;
2. The progress made against the 2022/23 internal audit plan were noted and approved.

9. **Strategic Risk Register**

\*AC9

The Lead Hub Member introduced the report to the Committee.

Two risks that were reviewed and removed were around the organisational commitment to change. The organisation had demonstrated commitment to change over the last few years. The other was the risk of Covid impact on services. Two risks had been added, one being the cost of living and supporting residents and the other, the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, with the added staff resource needed along with the current housing crisis.

In response to a Member question on the difficulty of recruiting new staff, the Leader stated the issue is under review and the package offered to staff was also being looked at.

It was then **RESOLVED** that;

The Committee reviewed the Strategic Risk Register (Appendix A) and made recommendations to Council to add the Homes for Ukraine and Cost of Living crisis risks identified to be scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

10. **Annual Treasury Management report 2021/22**

\*AC10

The Hub Lead Member introduced the report to Members.

It was then **RESOLVED** that;

1. The Committee approved the actual 2021/22 prudential and treasury indicators in the report.
2. Noted the Annual Treasury Management report for 2021/22

11. **Investment Property Update and Monitoring Report**

\*AC11

The Lead Hub Member introduced the report to Members. The Head of Strategy and Projects responded to a Member question on opportunities in the market for more investment property. He stated that there was nothing on the market currently of interest.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Committee noted the performance and risks of the investment property portfolio to date.

The Meeting concluded at 2.20 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chairman**

---