

Audit Committee  
30 January 2025

## WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the AUDIT Committee held on Thursday 30 January 2025 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors D.Panter (Chair)  
C.Watson (Vice-Chairman)  
J. Boulton  
K. Bonkur  
R. Platt

ALSO Ian Winter (Independent Person)  
PRESENT: K. Fuller (SIAS)  
C. Paisley (KPMG)

OFFICIALS R.Baker, Executive Director (Finance & Transformation)  
PRESENT: H.O'Keeffe, Assistant Director (Finance)  
B.Compton, Democratic Services Officer

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64. APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

No apologies were received.

65. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the meeting held on 5 September 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

66. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 9

No notifications for urgent business were received.

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

There were no declarations of interest.

68. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received the Audit Progress Report from the Shared Internal Audit Service in delivering the Council's Annual Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25 and included proposed amendments, the implementation status of previously

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agreed audit recommendations and an update of performance indicators as at 16 January 2025.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- A Member asked for an explanation housing benefits in Appendix A where it said audit plan days are at 10 but audit billable days are only at 3, and asked if it is a good sign that they haven't been done because things are going well.
- SIAS confirmed that it is a snapshot of where they are as of 16<sup>th</sup> January. 10 days have been allocated and the 3 is how many days have been worked and billed so far.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the following:

- a) the Internal Audit Progress Report for the period to 16 January 2025.
- b) the implementation status of internal audit recommendations and the management update.

69. KPMG EXTERNAL YEAR END AUDIT REPORT

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Members received the Year End Audit Report from KPMG which had been prepared in connection with their audit of the financial statements of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council prepared in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards as adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24, as at and for the year ended 31 March 2024.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- A member asked what risk does the fact that there wasn't a previous audit, represent to the External Audit and the Council.
- KPMG responded that the risk to the audit in the current year has impacted on the opinion they are able to give because they have no assurance of the opening of balances and therefore it is difficult to have assurance over the closing position. The longer-term impact is that they will have to do additional work to get to a place of giving an unqualified opinion. In terms of the level of impact, having a single year unaudited is a lesser impact than those local authorities who have 3 or 4 years unaudited. As the council was clean for the 2022-year end, a gap for 2023-year end and then to a fairly complete picture for 2024, although not ideal, does not mean a significant impact.
- Executive Director (Finance & Transformation) added that it has only been one year that a disclaimer was applied. The key risks to financial

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statements are outlined in the report such as valuation of land and buildings, valuations of pensions. They don't impact from a financial sustainability point of view. Things that would have an impact are over and under accruals of creditors or debtors. A large part of that was tested as part of the 23/24 audit and anything significant would have flushed out through the 2024/25 in year budget monitoring.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the report.

70. KPMG ANNUAL AUDITOR'S REPORT

Members received the Auditor's Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2024 which provided a summary of the findings and key issues arising from the 2023-24 audit of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

Members noted the following:

- A Member commented that it is nice to know, and residents can take some reassurance that there were no identified significant risks, which broadly indicates that Welwyn Hatfield is a very well-run council.
- A Member asked regarding the term value for money if it is that an accepted phrase in this scenario.
- KPMG responded that it is very much the accepted phrase and has been used as long as they have done this job. The NAO guidance is the value for money and the NAO guidance has objective criteria to apply

RESOLVED:

Members noted this report.

71. 2023/24 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Members received the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the following:

- a) The Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 were previously reviewed by the Committee on 25 June 2024.
- b) That delegated approval has already been granted for the finalisation of the accounts and issuance of the letter of representation.
- c) That any final changes to the accounts, on issuance of the auditor's final report, will be undertaken as required, and the accounts will be approved by the statutory backstop date.

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72. SUCH OTHER BUSINESS AS, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, IS OF SUFFICIENT URGENCY TO WARRANT IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION

There were no items of urgent business.

Meeting ended at 8.00 pm