

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
AUDIT COMMITTEE
Council Chamber - Town Hall
28 October 2021 (7.00 - 8.10 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS:

Conservative Group	Viddy Persaud (Vice-Chair), Roger Ramsey and Judith Holt
Residents' Group	Gerry O'Sullivan
Upminster & Cranham Residents' Group	Gillian Ford
North Havering Residents Group	Martin Goode (in the Chair)

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no disclosures of interests.

Through the Chairman, announcements were made regarding emergency evacuation arrangements and the decision making process followed by the Committee.

78 MINUTES OF THE MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22nd July 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman at a later date.

79 ASSURANCE PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee were presented with a report outlining the work undertaken by the Assurance Service during the period from 1st July 2021 to 30th September 2021.

The Committee noted that 18 reports had been completed and requested a breakdown of each of the reports to be circulated by the appropriate officer. Members noted that the service had found an incident relating to direct debits paid to the Council by residents. The Service had found that the BACS system had been upgraded which had caused the direct debit amounts to be much higher than they should have been. The Committee were pleased to hear that no residents had been put into debt due to the error and that the management team had conducted an investigation into the problem. The Committee **agreed** to receive a more detailed report at the next meeting.

The Committee also noted that the Council was still undergoing the process to retrieve the money which was used for fraudulent actions using a corporate card.

Members were pleased with the level of information presented in the risk register and requested an indicator to show whether a risk was newly added.

The Committee **noted** the report.

80 **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2020/21**

The Committee was presented with the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts.

Members noted the Statement of Accounts was published in July 2021 but Ernst & Young were continuing with Audit which is due to complete before December 2021. No issues have been raised by the Auditors so far. Training slides were to be circulated by Kevin Miles. Members noted the general reserve balance was £10.9 million, the property, plants and equipment value had increased by £187 million and the Business Rates Income had reduced by £42 million (mainly due to reliefs offered due to COVID) but was offset by Government grants. Members noted that a decision was due to be made to continue with PSAA group tender exercise to decide on external auditors.

The Committee member were disappointed to hear that the EY audit had not been completed by officers explained that this was due to a lack of staff due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that the majority of councils were delayed in signing off their accounts.

The Committee **noted** the report.

Chairman