

Internal Audit Advisory Committee 7th February 2022

Report to Full Council for 17th February 2022

Attendees: Cllr P. Williamson, Cllr J. Moore, Cllr T. Tarran, D. Reynolds (Town Clerk)

Apologies and declarations of pecuniary interests

Apologies for Cllr K. Booker were noted.

No declarations of pecuniary interest were noted.

Contracts Schedule

The contracts schedule as utilised by the office was distributed prior to the meeting to all members. Cllr J Moore had created an additional document for consideration. Cllr Moore raised concerns about end dates, contract values and date formats utilised. The Town Clerk explained the reasoning for these matters and the office use of pivoted excel reports. The content and proposed usage of the documents were discussed by all members alongside consideration of the renewal of the utilities contracts for gas and electricity. The following actions were agreed to be recommended to Full Council.

Recommendations –

1. Contracts due to expire within the following three months to be emailed or presented to committee members at a scheduled meeting, with officer actions prior to ratification at Full Council in a timely manner as per the requirements of Financial Regulation 11.1.b.
2. Remove all expired contracts from the schedule presented to the advisory committee.
3. To look to renew the utilities contracts in September 2022 following a review process including usage comparisons to start with the advisory committee in July 2022.
4. The contracts for the fire and security alarms, emergency lighting systems and fire extinguishers to be reviewed by the Estates Committee by March/April 2022.

Grant Funding Applications

Two grant applications had been received and were screened by the members prior to circulation of the application grid to Full Council.

1. Centre Stage
At the January advisory committee meeting a variety of questions centred around the newly formed organisation, their charitable status and expected outcomes for the investment in new equipment were unanswered in the application form and members felt the most suitable approach for this matter was to invite the organisation to the February advisory Committee meeting to present and resolve the matters. Unfortunately the organisation representatives are unavailable at the stated time for the advisory committee so the Town Clerk is to contact them and ask for dates to be scheduled to meet members after 5.30pm.
2. MHA Live at Home
Members felt that the majority of a newly submitted application was for revenue costs (venue hire) which are strictly prohibited in the policy. The remaining items (exercise bands and acrylic paint sets) were agreed to be recommended to Council for funding.

Recommendation – To recommend to Full Council funding of £129.78 to MHA Live at Home, the remaining £840 to be rejected as revenue costs.

Action - To invite Centre Stage for a meeting with members of the advisory committee after 5.30pm on a date to be arranged.

Update on Online Banking

Members were advised by the Town Clerk that six members were now agreed as cheque signatories for the Council's bank accounts at Barclays. Three members were now approved for online banking and the remaining three members were still to complete the rather frustrating process of authorisation. The January payments utilising the online payment method was noted.

Cllr Moore enquired as to the availability of information in regards to distribution of funds over different banking organisations and was advised that this was an agreed action for the March meeting. (As agreed at January 2022 meeting.)

Actions – Remaining members to complete the process at the earliest convenience.

Internal Auditor

Members considered the options for Internal Auditors as recommended by Shropshire Association of Local Councils and a proposal from the previously utilised company for the financial internal audit for 2021/22. It was considered by the members that the services of a new internal auditor be employed for the next financial year to avoid complacency in the audit process. The following recommendations were agreed

Recommendation -

1. Full Council to approve the appointment of JDH Business Services Ltd for 2021/22 at a cost of £666.00 plus VAT. (Financial Audit budget line, Local Government Act 1972 s.111)

Actions –

The Town Clerk to investigate the larger town council auditors. To be reported to the advisory committee in September 2022.

Governance Review

Cllrs Tarran and J Moore had circulated a report prior to the meeting. The contents of the report were discussed and the following recommendations were agreed

1. That when carrying out their Governance Review of Shifnal Town Council Wards, Shropshire Council consider reallocating the existing number of 15 Councillors between the three Wards (based on their existing boundaries) so that there is a more equal ratio of Councillors to electors between each Ward, taking into account significant recent (and proposed) housing developments that have taken place in Shifnal Rural and Manor Wards.
2. It is considered that the merging of smaller parishes into Shifnal Town Council is not considered appropriate at this time.

The next meeting of the Internal Audit Advisory Committee will be held on 8th March 2022 at 2.30pm.

Meeting closed at 16.07hrs

Prepared by Denise Reynolds, Town Clerk/RFO

09.02.2022 updated 24.02.2022