

Dublin City Council

Audit Committee

**Minutes of Meeting held on 8th July, 2020 at 9.30 a.m.
via MS Teams**

Attendance:

Members

Ms. Louise Ryan, Trinity College Dublin, Chairperson (LR) (Chair)
Mr. Johnny McElhinney, Docklands Business Forum (JMCE)
Mr. Nathy Walsh, Institute of Public Administration (NW)
Councillor Nial Ring (Cllr. NR)
Councillor Naoise O Muiri (Cllr. NOM)

Officials:

Mr. Owen Keegan, Chief Executive (CE)
Ms. Kathy Quinn, Head of Finance (KQ)
Ms. Theresa Lannon, Acting Head of Internal Audit (TL)
Ms. Martina Mc Loughlin, Acting Administrative Officer, Internal Audit

Attendees from Housing & Community Services Dept. - in relation to Item 3 on the agenda:

Mr. Hugh Mc Kenna, Acting Executive Manager (HMCK)
Mr. Frank D'Arcy, Senior Executive Officer, Maintenance Section (FD'A)
Ms. Tara Robertson, Administrative Officer, Rents Section (TR)
Ms. Joann Reid, Project Manager, Data Management Unit (JR)

Attendees from the Human Resources and Corporate Services & Transformation Depts. - in relation to Item 4 on the agenda:

Mr. Gerry Geraghty, Acting Head of Human Resources and Corporate Services (GG)
Ms. Eileen Quinlivan, Executive Manager (EQ)
Mr. Brendan Hayden, Acting Executive Manager (BH)

Non-Attendance:

Professor Diarmuid Hegarty, Dublin Chamber (DH)

1. Minutes of Audit Committee meeting held on 30th January, 2020.

A report was submitted to the Members on the Update of Actions from the AC meeting held on 30th January last.

Appendix A:

- Action 1 to be dealt with under Item 3 on the agenda for this meeting
- Actions 2, 3 and 5 had been dealt with and were noted by the AC
- Action 4 was discussed, in relation to the Housing & Community Services Department coming under the remit of the Corporate Project Support Office. The CE confirmed that an instruction had been given and he would follow-up re implementation. The AC requested that this issue be kept open and followed-up with an update to the AC.
- Action 6 was deferred to the next meeting of the AC.

Appendix B:

- Actions 2 & 3 would be dealt with under Item 3 on the agenda for this meeting

The minutes were subsequently agreed.

Action 1: CE to give update to the AC in relation to the Housing & Community Services Department coming under the remit of the Corporate Project Support Office

2. Standing Item on the agenda – Any Conflict of Interest of A.C. Members

No conflict of interest was declared.

3. Action Items from Previous Meetings by Mr. Hugh Mc Kenna, Acting Executive Manager, Housing & Community Services:

- a. Report on Housing Rent Arrears**
- b. Report on Fixed Assets Register**
- c. Update on Joinery Workshop**

Presentations were given for the three areas listed and the AC asked questions following each presentation. The Members asked that the presentations be forwarded to them.

Action 2: The presentations given by Housing to be forwarded to the Members:

- **Report on Housing Rent Arrears**
- **Report on Fixed Assets Register**
- **Update on Joinery Workshop**

a. Housing Rent Arrears:

The AC raised some concerns about rent arrears increasing, including the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on rent collection measures.

KQ queried what the situation was in relation to payments being deducted from social welfare/employment payments. Housing responded that this was being pursued nationally through the LGMA.

In response to a query about a national rent scheme, the CE stated that this was an issue for Government but was complicated as conditions varied throughout the country and in the absence of political consensus on this issue, it was not being pursued

The Committee requested that Housing would keep them updated on this issue and that there should be strong, early intervention on pursuing rent arrears.

Action 3: The AC to be kept updated on the issue of Housing Rent Arrears

b. Fixed Assets Register:

This work was in response to the Principal Local Government Auditor's (PLGA) report in 2017. The AC queried when it is scheduled to be completed. Housing responded that they were eighteen months into a three-year project to establish data governance and that the stock figures were comprehensive. However, this was only one part of the project and they were looking at all issues under the Open House Management System.

KQ stated that the 2019 and 2020 figures were not at the level expected, but the PLGA will re-visit the work done to date in her next report and the AC will review when the PLGA report is received.

The AC will review when the next PLGA's report is presented to them.

Action 4: The AC to review the work done on the Fixed Assets Register, following consideration of the PLGA's report for 2019

c. Update on Joinery Workshop

The Members welcomed the update, particularly that a unit cost was now available for direct labour, and commended the work being carried out by the JW. They requested that output be reviewed after one year and a new audit carried out for comparison purposes. TL confirmed that the outstanding recommendations from this audit were being followed-up under the current Review of Recommendations.

Action 5: Review of output from the Joinery Workshop after one year and a new audit to be carried out for comparison purposes

4. Update on Covid 19 Business Continuity Measures

GG gave a verbal report on DCC's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, in terms of the challenges presented in continuing to provide services and in relation to working conditions for staff, particularly under Health & Safety.

A Crisis Management Team was already in place, which proved very beneficial. DCC responded based on national public health guidelines. A group has been established to look at how DCC moves forward in terms of staff returning to work or continuing to work remotely. The Members thanked GG for the positive report.

5. Audit Reports:

a. In-Depth Check of the Appraisal & Planning Stages of the North City Operational Depot (NCOD), under the Public Spending Code (PSC)

KQ outlined the reasons for this project, i.e. to provide better working conditions for staff, particularly under Health & Safety and to free up sites for housing. She noted the Satisfactory outcome of the Report and confirmed that the tender price had increased and DCC were looking at ways to reduce this. The AC asked how it would be funded. The CE responded that it would be from the sale of sites and sanction from the Department for borrowing. Sites would be made available to AHBs, who can access funding. He also stated that the Cost Benefit Analysis would be re-run and would be re-submitted to the Elected Members for approval and he welcomed the Satisfactory outcome of the report, and the report's recommendations which were classified as low level risks.

b. In-Depth Check of Dublin City Council's Ongoing Management of Revenue Spend in Relation to Road Maintenance and Improvement, under the Public Spending Code (PSC)

The AC noted this Report.

NR informed the Members that a two-page report was presented at the last Finance SPC meeting in relation to the Funding of the Maintenance of DCC's Road Network. This report to be circulated to the Members.

Action 6: Finance SPC report on Funding of the Maintenance of DCC's Road Network to be circulated to the AC Members

c. Investigation of Allegation that Residential Parking Permits have been issued to Non-Residents in respect of a specified street

TL outlined the context for this audit, i.e. a member of the public made a complaint in relation to parking permits, which was ultimately investigated by the IA Unit. The AC commended the work of Internal Audit in investigating this matter and bringing it to a successful conclusion, but noted its concerns in relation to the process deficiencies which allowed this incident to occur.

TL advised that recommendations have been made which will reduce the possibility of this occurring, including two proofs of residency when applying for a permit and continued proof of residency when applying for a renewal to be produced every four years.
The AC queried if this could happen elsewhere and suggested that sampling/spot checking should be undertaken to see if this is commonplace.

Action 7: Sample/spot check of parking permits issued in high-demand areas to be undertaken

6. Training/familiarisation sessions required by AC Members

LR asked the Members to let her or KQ know if there was any training they felt would be beneficial.

7. A.O.B

LR informed the Members that following Cllr. Mary Fitzpatrick's appointment to the Seanad, it is expected that her replacement to the AC will be appointed at the September City Council meeting.

Due to Covid-19 constraints, the AFS will not be presented to the AC at the September meeting, but at the final meeting of the year. Members will be contacted closer to the September meeting in relation to whether the meeting will be held virtually or in person.

The AC asked that a letter of thanks be sent to Mr Hugh Fitzpatrick and to wish him well on his retirement.

The meeting concluded at 11.00am.



Louise Ryan, Chairperson

Date: 22/09/2020

Appendix A

Action 1: The CE to give update to the AC in relation to the Housing & Community Services Department coming under the remit of the Corporate Project Support Office

Action 2: The presentations given by Housing to be forwarded to the Members:

- Report on Housing Rent Arrears
- Report on Fixed Assets Register
- Update on Joinery Workshop

Action 3: The AC to be kept updated on the issue of Housing Rent Arrears

Action 4: The AC to review the work done on the Fixed Assets Register, following consideration of the PLGA's report for 2019

Action 5: Review of output from the Joinery Workshop after one year and a new audit to be carried out for comparison purposes

Action 6: Finance SPC report on Funding of the Maintenance of DCC's Road Network to be circulated to the AC Members

Action 7: Sample/spot check of parking permits issued in high-demand areas to be undertaken

Appendix B

Actions agreed at the Audit Committee meeting of 30th January, 2020

Action 6: HF to arrange a talk on climate change, to be given to the AC at the next meeting.