

## **GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**22 November 2022**

*Present:-* Councillor Paul Smith (Chair)  
Councillor Dave Harris, Councillor Sam McCarthy,  
Councillor Sara Naylor, Councillor Chris Pearson,  
Councillor Rhys Smithson

*Substitutions:* Councillor William Sunnucks for Councillor Barbara Wood

*Also Present:-* Councillor David King, Councillor Martyn Warnes

### **335. Minutes of the previous meeting**

*RESOLVED* that: the minutes of the meeting of 18 October 2022 be confirmed as an accurate record.

### **336. Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited Annual Report for 2021/2022**

Councillor Smith, Chair of the Committee, indicated that it was his intention to deal with this item first, and not in the order published in the agenda, to the unanimous agreement of the Committee. Accordingly, the Committee considered a report setting out the performance summary and activities of the Council's wholly owned commercial companies during the fiscal year for 2021/22.

Pam Donnelly, Chief Executive of Colchester Borough Council (the Council), attended the meeting and addressed the Committee. She wished to make sure that the Committee was aware that Paul Smith, the Managing Director of Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited (CCHL), had decided to retire, and would be leaving his role towards the end of February 2023. There were potential risks associated with any senior member of staff leaving a commercial organisation and, with the support of Cabinet, a risk assessment would accordingly be prepared to identify any areas which needed to be addressed. Additionally, the recent Peer Review had recommended that a full independent and external review of the operation of the Council's wholly owned commercial companies be undertaken, and accordingly an external company had been appointed to carry out this work. It was anticipated that further a further update would be able to be provided to the Committee after January 2023.

Councillor Warnes, Chair of the Board of Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited (CCHL) attended the meeting and addressed the Committee. The Committee was invited to review the performance of CCHL and its subsidiaries as shown in the annual report which was presented to it. The Committee was also invited to make any recommendations to Cabinet in respect of CCHL for the financial year 2022/2023 or beyond. Over the past year, the dividend figure achieved by CCHL had been £172,000, although the continued impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, and issues with construction industry supply chains and the war in Ukraine had also affected this figure. In addition to this dividend, CCHL generated other income for the Council in the form of rents for office space and other services as defined by the various Service Level Agreements (SLA)s in place. CCHL was able to access funding streams which were not available to public sector organisations, and work in partnership with the Council on projects which benefited from combined funding streams. Risk assessments for CCHL and its subsidiary companies were maintained and regularly reviewed by the Board, and it was considered that a key risk was that attached to the delivery of income targets, both capital and revenue, and management costs. These risks would be actively managed through monitoring and reporting through the governance arrangements which were in place.

It was considered that CCHL had delivered many successes over the past 12 months, including:

- completed delivery of a full fibre broadband network in support of the Council's 2017/2022 Digital Strategy, together with the establishment of Colchester Fibre to provide and operate an ambitious commercial broadband programme across the borough
- Support for the Council's green agenda, including the appointment of a contractor for the design and build of the proposed low carbon district heat network. Additionally, feasibility work had been completed for development of a microgrid to provide electricity generated from a proposed 4.5 megawatt PV solar farm, and the Helpline service had taken delivery of a new fleet of hybrid electric vehicles
- there had been a full upgrade and extension of the town's high definition digital closed circuit television (CCTV) system, increasing the coverage and clarity of footage
- improvements to the public realm, including the new Stanway Community Centre, and the creation of a new and accessible public square at Balkerne Gate
- Amphora Events had put on over 500 events, attracting over 125,000 visitors, and Colchester Weddings had seen increased demand for its services, buoyed by the relaxation of lockdown restrictions
- The Estates Team had continued to identify and secure assets management initiatives and negotiate land and property disposals and acquisitions to bring in substantial total capital receipts to the Council. The team was also advising on Touchstone Estates new £65m commercial leisure development on the Northern Gateway site, the largest leisure development of its kind currently being built in the country.

The Committee was assured that CCHL would participate fully in the forthcoming independent review of its services, to help the Council assess whether the companies were realising the benefits they were established to deliver.

Alistair Wilson, Senior Commercial Manager Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd, attended the meeting and provided the Committee with a presentation containing a review of the activities of CCHL for the financial year 2021/2022, together with an overview of the current financial year 2022/2023. Future business plans were being finalised, but would be subject to the outcome of the external review of CCHL which was to be carried out.

The key achievements of the Amphora Group were highlighted in the Annual Report which had been presented to the Committee, and the Committee's attention was drawn to the wider benefits of the Amphora Group which were not necessarily reflected in the dividend which had been provided, but could be seen, for example, in the large number of people from outside the borough who had been drawn to events that had been provided. Additionally, there had been a 65% uplift in arrests made due to the increased quality of the CCTV footage now available to the police, together with 23% more incidents detected in the town centre, serving to make the town centre a safer place to visit.

Michael Woods, Energy Manager, Colchester Amphora Energy, attended the meeting and addressed the Committee. The Committee heard that Colchester Amphora Energy company was set up to develop the heat network as part of the Northern Gateway development. A long tender process to appoint a company to deliver this project had been completed, and additional work was being undertaken to develop a microgrid with battery and solar storage.

Alistair Wilson advised the Committee that the major achievement of Colchester Amphora Homes during the financial year 2021/2022 had been the completion of work at the Council's Creffield Villa site, delivering 6 apartments, including 2 which were affordable rent. Redevelopment of property at Military Road had also been progressed to deliver 6, 1 and 2 bedroom apartments and 2 new 2 bedroom houses for social housing. The development of a number of garage sites had also been progressed, and further sites had been proposed which would yield a total of 16, 2 and 3 bedroom homes.

The key achievement of Colchester Amphora Trading had been the beginning of the construction of a £65m leisure park at the Northern Gateway development, which was due to be completed in September 2023, and this was supported by additional significant infrastructure work on the development. Of critical importance for the forthcoming year was the continuation of infrastructure development, and the obtaining of outline planning approval for all proposed uses of the Northern Gateway site.

Other achievements had included the management of the overhaul of Rowan House, the completion of phase 1 of new public space at Balmerne Gate to complement the redevelopment of the Mercury Theatre, and the commencement of the construction of the Stanway Lakelands Community Centre.

Elizabeth Simpson, Head of Estates, Amphora Trading – Estates, attended the meeting remotely and addressed the Committee. The Committee heard that over the preceding year, the main focus of the Estates Team had been to ensure that the Council had received rental income which was owed to it via its property portfolio, together with identifying asset management initiatives which had generated capital income for the Council. In the forthcoming year, priorities would include continuing to limit the loss of rental income as well as the delivery of expert lease and management advice on Turnstone's Colchester Northern Gateway Leisure Park. Work would continue to secure asset management initiatives to increase Council income, to include finalising the letting of office space at Rowan House.

With regard to Colchester Events, Alistair Wilson advised the Committee that there had been a very strong recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic which had limited its activities in previous years. A number of developments had taken place including moving to cashless operations at events and the launch of a digital magazine called 'The Ticket' which was aimed at raising awareness of events and boosting ticket sales. Ticket sales for events at Charter Hall now averaged 700 per event, as opposed to approximately 400 tickets per event before the pandemic. Events had also been delivered for other local authorities in Essex, and negotiations were ongoing to deliver more events in the future.

The Helpline service had continued to offer 24 hour a day support to its customers, and a full monitoring and response service had been maintained. In addition to this, over 350 new customers had been attracted to the service, with 1 in 7 customers now located outside Colchester. Work was ongoing within the wider healthcare sector including the East of England Ambulance service, and waiting times for a visit from helpline were currently approximately 45 minutes. Priorities for the forthcoming year included the digital upgrade of the Helpline operating system and the further development of the partnership with healthcare services to assist customers who had fallen but who were not injured. Additionally, joint ventures with other local authorities were being considered to extend the reach of the service across north Essex.

A local full fibre broadband network, funded by a grant from the Department of Culture Media and Sport, had been deployed and completed by the Amphora Trading team. Colchester Fibre had then established as a trading brand to be not only the wholesale provider of fibre broadband, but also the service provider. Significant external investment had been attracted to the scheme and as a result of the combined investment, full fibre broadband would be available to 15,000 properties.

A Committee member was pleased to note the excellent achievements of CCHL over the previous few years, despite the fact that they had initial reservations about the formation of the companies. Although the content of the report was appreciated, it was suggested that far more financial detail was required in future to enable the Committee to properly consider the activities of CCHL, and the statement of accounts should be provided in the future. It was further noted that the people

pictured in the annual report document were not representative of the diverse population of Colchester, and this should be addressed.

In response to questioning from the Committee, Alistair Wilson confirmed that the fibre broadband network was owned by Colchester Borough Council, and that Colchester Amphora Trading, operating as Colchester Fibre, had been appointed to operate the network and to commercialise it on behalf of the Council. Negotiations were ongoing as to the fee which would be paid to the Council for the rights to commercialise the network, with the ongoing operating costs being covered within the revenue of Colchester Fibre. A Committee member required specific additional information in relation to the location of the capital expenditure and operational expenditure budgets in relation to the required continued maintenance of the fibre network, noting that such maintenance would not be accounted for via revenue accounts but would be a capital cost. The Committee heard that the cost of maintenance for the area of the network which the Council owned had been provided for within the projected expenditure costs of the company. The Committee remained concerned that a large sum of money had been invested in the network, with a lack of clarity in relation to the income to be generated over the life of the network, and who was responsible for its maintenance, and the cost of such maintenance. It was suggested that a recommendation be made to Cabinet that more information be provided in relation to the issues which had been raised.

The Committee queried the plans which had been referenced for a solar farm, considering that the Council had not taken any decisions recently which would indicate a site large enough to support a 4.5 megawatt solar farm had been identified. Michael Woods indicated that feasibility work was in progress, and the appropriate land was available to host the proposed solar farm. The feasibility report would be circulated to the Committee once it had been received.

In response to a number of questions from a Committee member, Alistair Wilson confirmed that the fibre network which had been constructed had been terminated at strategic points, and at these points commercial enterprises were able to connect to the network and build it onwards themselves. No further information was available at this point as to which commercial operators would be involved in the future. Limited printed copies of 'The Ticket' were still available and distributed through key partners, however, this number would be reduced year on year. Information in respect of the Council's proposed continued development of its garage sites would be provided to the Committee after the meeting.

The Committee requested further details of when the draft accounts for CCHL would be available for inspection, considering that these formed an essential part of the overview process of the Shareholder Committee, and it was confirmed that draft accounts were with the Companies' accountant and were expected to be presented as final accounts in the coming weeks. The date for this presentation would be confirmed to the Committee.

A Committee member voiced strong concern that with the larger projects that were being managed by CCHL, where the council was potentially at risk, there was a lack of clarity as to where the responsibility for these projects lay. The capacity in which

CCHL acted was questioned, and it was considered that profits which had been realised from some very significant investments had been very modest. It was noted that there were some very large projects, and it was not clear on whose balance sheet they rested. It was not possible to consider the operation of CCHL without this essential information, and there was concern that the primary risk associated with larger projects rested finally with the Council. The Committee needed to be able to consider the risks and rewards associated specifically with the Turnstone development.

Councillor King, the Leader of the Council, attended the meeting and, with the permission of the Chair, addressed the Committee. Thanks was offered to the officers of CCHL for their hard work during the preceding difficult years, and for following the remit set by the Council which was to be ambitious and deliver income. He acknowledged the questions which had been raised by the Committee, and considered that it was appropriate that full and considered responses be given to these. Pam Donnelley explained to the Committee that the initial risk assessment which had been commissioned would quickly give an overall feel of the position in relation to issues which had been raised during the meeting.

Summarising the debate that had taken place, the Chair of the Committee identified the key areas on which the Committee would make recommendations to Cabinet:

1. Greater details be provided with regard to the maintenance of the fibre broadband network,
2. Detailed projections be provided in relation to the proposed solar panel site at the Northern Gateway development,
3. An explanation be provided for the delays in the production of accounts, and confirmation that the accounts would be referred back to the Committee to review,
4. More information be provided in respect of the potential risks and rewards associated with the Turnstone development
5. Details with regard to the level of investment and expected returns associated with the fibre network itself be provided.

A Committee member suggested that greater attention should be given to the use which was made of housing land, and questioned why the Council was building housing itself, when a private developer could do this. Additionally, appraisals were needed for each and every element of the Northern Gateway heat network project, to provide assurance that it was understood what the investment required was, and what the returns were likely to be. The Committee did acknowledge that the role of the Amphora companies had a social element as well as a commercial one, and that the levels of provision of social housing which were required by the Council were unlikely to be met by a private developer.

The Committee indicated that it would be happy to scrutinise the business cases of projects brought forward by CCHL and offer appropriate advice, if this was the wish of Cabinet, although it would be careful not to usurp the position of the CCHL Board, which also included elected Members.

Andrew Weavers, Monitoring Officer, confirmed to the Committee that its Terms of Reference when acting as the Shareholder Committee for CCHL and its subsidiary companies were:

1. Consider and review the activities and financial performance of CCHL and its subsidiary companies, Colchester Amphora Housing, Colchester Amphora Energy, and Colchester Amphora Trading,
2. Receive, review and recommend to cabinet CCHL business plans, including its subsidiary companies, annually, and to review performance including the delivery of the dividend,
3. Monitor, challenge and make recommendations to Cabinet regarding CCHL and its subsidiary companies,
4. Make recommendations to cabinet on how it should exercise its functions flowing from its ownership of shares in CCHL and its subsidiary companies.

*RESOLVED* that: The Governance and Audit Committee had reviewed the performance of Colchester Commercial Holdings Limited (CCHL) and its subsidiaries during 2021/22 as provided in the Annual Report.

*RECOMMENDED to CABINET:*

1. Greater details be provided to the Governance and Audit Committee with regard to the maintenance of the fibre broadband network,
2. Detailed projections be provided to the Governance and Audit Committee in relation to the proposed solar panel site at the Northern Gateway development,
3. An explanation be provided for the delays in the production of accounts, and confirmation that the accounts would be referred back to the Governance and Audit Committee to review,
4. More information be provided to the Governance and Audit Committee in respect of the potential risks and rewards associated with the Turnstone development
5. Details with regard to the level of investment and expected returns associated with the fibre network itself be provided to the Governance and Audit Committee.

### **337. Review of the Council's Ethical Governance Policies**

The Committee considered a report requesting that it review Colchester Borough Council (the Council)'s updated Ethical Governance policies. These were the key policies which set out the standards of conduct and integrity that the Council expects of councillors, staff, partners, suppliers and customers when conducting Council business. They contained procedures for dealing with breaches of the policies and processes to be followed.

Andrew Weavers, Strategic Governance Manager and Monitoring Officer, attended the meeting to introduce the report, and assist the Committee in its deliberations. The Committee heard that breaches of the Policies would be pursued, and procedures were in place to enable any person to raise genuine concerns about the conduct of anyone acting for or on behalf of the council. The Committee had last considered the Council's Ethical Governance Statement at its meeting in November 2021, and an updated Statement was presented to the Committee which had been amended to take account of changes to the leadership of the Council.

The Ethical Governance Policies had last been considered by this Committee in November 2021, and the Policies had subsequently been approved by Full Council and adopted into the Council's Policy Framework. The attention of the Committee was drawn to information in the Officer's report showing the number of times the Policies had been invoked in recent years, and none of the Policies had been invoked in the past year. The Policies had been reviewed, and it was confirmed that they were up to date, reflected best practice and remained fit for purpose. An additional Policy, the ICT Password Policy was included in this years review and would form part of the Ethical Governance suite of Policies in future years.

The Committee heard that the Monitoring Officer wrote annually to Councillors and Officers, reminding them of their responsibilities in respect of the Anti-Fraud and Corruption and Whistleblowing Policies, and training had been provided recently on data protection and cyber security. The Council's internal auditors had reviewed all the Policies, and were satisfied that they remained fit for purpose and up to date.

The Income and Debt Management Policy had been reviewed by the Council's Customer Team, and an amendment had been made to this to reflect the fact that the Council was a referring partner to the Money and Pension Services, which would help and support customers who were in debt. The Council complied with the governments 'Breathing Space' scheme in relation to managing debt, and write-off limits had been increased for Officers and Managers, and it was hoped that these changes would assist customer during the current cost of living crisis.

A Committee member requested that every Policy reflected the up to date name of the Council, should it be changed to Colchester City Council at the forthcoming Full Council meeting, and suggested that the use of job titles, and not staff names, be used throughout the documents to ensure that the Policies remained current if there was a change in the holder of a role.

A Committee member expressed surprise that none of the IT Policies had been invoked during the past three years, and requested some more detail on what sort of checks and tests had been carried out during this time.

*RESOLVED* that:

- It be recommended to Full Council that it adopts the statement of intent in relation to ethical governance.
- The following revised policies had been reviewed:

- Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Anti-Money Laundering Policy
- Covert Surveillance Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Information Security Policy
- Retention Policy
- Processing of Special Category & Criminal Convictions Personal Data Policy
- Password Policy
- Income and Debt Management Policy

and that it be recommended to Full Council that they be approved for inclusion in the Council's Policy Framework.

### **338. Annual Review of the Member's Code of Conduct and the Council's Localism Act Arrangements**

The Committee considered a report requesting it to review the Councillors' (Members') Code of Conduct and the Council's Localism Act Arrangements for dealing with complaints made regarding Councillors.

Andrew Weavers, Strategic Governance Manager, attended the meeting to introduce the report, and assist the Committee in its deliberations. The Committee was asked to conduct a review of the Member's Code of Conduct annually, however, a new Code, based on the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Code of Conduct was to be implemented from 1 December 2022, and this would therefore be the last report looking back over the current Code. The attention of the Committee was drawn to the appendix to the Officer's report which contained details of allegations which had been received over the past year, and the outcomes of those allegations.

In discussion, the Committee sought clarification in respect of the numbers of an apparent slight discrepancy in the numbers of allegations which had been reported, and it was explained that this was the result of multiple complaints being received about the same Councillor, and that the overall figures were correct. The Committee sought assurance that where the Monitoring Officer was investigating a complicated complaint, that they received adequate support in the performance of their normal role, considering that a duty of care was owed to staff to prevent overwork. The Committee was assured that the Council had a statutory duty to ensure that the Monitoring Officer was supplied with the necessary resources to carry out their functions, and adequate support was available.

In respect of the New LGA Code of Conduct, it was confirmed that all Councillors would receive a copy of the new Code and a link to the LGA guidance in relation to this. If Councillors had any queries about the Code, the Monitoring Officer would be happy to answer these.

A Committee member noted that there was no right of appeal against a decision to take no further action in respect of a complaint which had been made, and wondered how such a position would be resolved? The Committee heard that although there was no right of appeal against the Monitoring Officer's decision, a complainant did have the right to refer the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, who would look at the matter independently to ensure that the Monitoring Officer had followed due process in coming to their conclusion. Two such referrals had been made in the past, and in both cases the Ombudsman had found that the Monitoring Officer had correctly followed the necessary procedure.

A Committee member voiced unease that the subject of a complaint could simply resign their role as a Councillor to avoid any further investigation, and there was nothing that would preclude them from standing for election again. It was confirmed that the law was very clear that the Code only applied while an individual was a Councillor, and once they ceased to be a Councillors the Code would no longer apply and no authority to continue investigations would exist.

*RESOLVED* that: the contents of the report be noted.

### **339. Guidance for Members on Dispensations**

The Committee considered a report requesting that it approve the proposed Guidance for Members and Co-opted Members on Dispensations, and that it be included in the Constitution.

Andrew Weavers, Strategic Governance Manager, attended the meeting to introduce the report, and assisted the Committee in its deliberations. As a consequence of introducing a new Code of Conduct, updated Guidance for Members on Dispensations was required. The existing Guidance had been amended to refer to the new Code of Conduct to ensure that it remained compliant, and the Committee was asked to adopt the revised Guidance on this basis.

*RESOLVED* that: the Guidance for Members and Co-opted Members on Dispensations, which had been presented to the Committee, be approved and that it be included in the Constitution.

### **340. Review of the Local Code of Corporate Governance**

The Committee considered a report requesting it to review the Local Code of Corporate Governance for 2022/23. The Local Code of Corporate Governance was how the Council demonstrated that its structures comply with the recognised principles of good governance.

Hayley McGrath, Corporate Governance Manager, attended the meeting to present the report and assist the Committee in its deliberations. Colchester Borough Council (the Council) had adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance which ensured that its activities were carried out in an open and fair manner, and in accordance with the six core principles set out in guidance issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), which were:

- Focusing on the purpose of the Council and outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area;
- Councillors and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;
- Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour;
- Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk;
- Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective; and
- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

The Code set out what actions had been taken to comply with the six principles, and these actions had been reviewed by senior Officers to ensure that they remained relevant to the current work of the Council. The Local Code had been updated to reflect the delivery of the strategic plan 2020-23 and Cabinet's vision and priorities, along with details of the peer challenge, the People Strategy, apprenticeship programme for staff, the creation of a central site for council data and provision of cost of living resources. Details of the newly created staff engagement group, 'Speak up Now', were also provided. Otherwise, there had been no significant changes to the Local Code following the review, and it was considered still fit for purpose.

A Committee member welcomed the Code, and considered that personal development plans for Councillors should be referenced in it. The Committee was advised that work in relation to the development of personal development plans for Councillors was ongoing with the Member Development Group, and it was anticipated that a formal structure for administering these would be in place soon. The Committee considered that personal development for all staff and Councillors was of key importance.

*RESOLVED* that:-

- the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance for 2022/23 had been reviewed,
- it be recommended to Full Council that the Local Code of Corporate Governance be approved for inclusion in the Council's Policy Framework.

### **341. Review of the Member/Officer Protocol**

The Committee considered a report requesting that it review the Member / Officer Protocol which provides a framework for good working relationships between Councillors and Officers.

Andrew Weavers, Strategic Governance Manager, attended the meeting to introduce the report, and assisted the Committee in its deliberations. The Committee were reminded that the Member/Officer protocol formed part of the Ethical Framework of the Council's Constitution which set a framework for good working relationships between Councillors and Officers. The Committee reviewed the Protocol on an annual basis, and was advised that Officers had reviewed the Protocol and considered that it was still fit for purpose and no changes were proposed.

In discussion, the Committee noted that references to the names of role holders should be replaced with the role only to allow for future continuity, and that references to Her Majesty be updated.

*RESOLVED* that: the Member / Officer Protocol be agreed and that it be included in the Council's Constitution.

### **342. Gifts and Hospitality – Review of Guidance for Councillors and Policy for Employees**

The Committee considered a report requesting it to approve updated guidance for Councillors and policy for employees.

Andrew Weavers, Strategic Governance Manager, attended the meeting to introduce the report, and assisted the Committee in its deliberations. The Committee heard that Guidance was offered to Councillors about accepting gifts and hospitality, and a similar Policy was in place for employees. Both documents were reviewed by the Committee on an annual basis, and the Committee heard that the Guidance for Councillors had been amended to ensure that it was consistent with the new Code of Conduct which had recently been adopted by the Council, but no change was proposed to the Policy for employees.

The Committee noted the new requirement to report an offered gift even if it was declined, and the Monitoring Officer confirmed that he would be writing to all Councillors in the near future to draw their attention to the new requirements of the Guidance.

A Committee member considered the hospitality which was offered to Councillors by the Council's wholly owned companies, where Councillors who sat on the Boards of the companies were regularly offered hospitality during the course of attending meetings, and wondered whether this needed to be declared. It was confirmed that the Guidance would be amended to clarify the position in relation to this situation.

In discussion, the Committee considered whether or not the information gathered as a result of declarations would be disclosable as the result of a Freedom of Information request, and whether or not it would be appropriate for warnings to be

issued to all Councillors if trends in the offering of gifts or hospitality were detected. Concern was expressed that the reputation of both individual Councillors and the Council itself may be damaged by the acceptance or refusal of gifts, however, it was considered that the maintenance of a register recording all such acceptances or refusals allowed for transparency in this regard which would offer reputational protection.

*RESOLVED* that:

- the proposed Guidance for Councillors regarding Gifts and Hospitality be approved and that it be included in the Constitution.
- the proposed Gifts and Hospitality Policy for Employees be approved.

### **343. Work Programme**

The Committee considered its draft work programme for 2022-23.

Matthew Evans, Democratic Services Officer, attended the meeting to introduce the report, and assisted the Committee in its deliberations. The Committee heard that, in accordance with its wishes, an extra meeting had been scheduled in February 2023 to allow it to devote its meeting in January 2023 to the dispensation of its duties as the Shareholder Committee to the Council's wholly owned commercial companies. The Committee was reminded that whenever it considered a report concerning the Council's wholly owned commercial companies, it was acting in its role as Shareholder Committee, however, the dedication of a meeting to the consideration of the commercial companies was felt to be necessary.

The Committee wished for the dedicated meeting to go ahead, even under the circumstances of an ongoing external review of the companies, and the change of management which had been confirmed at the meeting. It was considered important that the activities of the companies be considered as had been proposed, in case any of the work of the Committee would feed into budget setting.

*RESOLVED* that:- the work programme for the Governance and Audit Committee be amended to read as follows:

17 January 2023

1. CCHL Half-Year Performance Report
2. Annual Review of the Council's Companies' Business Plans

15 February 2023

1. Interim Review of the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan
2. Risk Management Progress Report
3. Mid-Year Internal Audit Assurance Report 2022/2023
4. Annual Review of Business Continuity