

Audit Committee 20 March 2018

Chairman's Annual Report – 2017/18

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the **change** that we seek." —Barack Obama

Wise words, that can and should be applied in many walks of life.

On Tuesday 30th January I received yet another E mail, this one surprised me as it was a reminder that the annual report was due for my role as your chair of Audit, it was not the fact that a report was required, it was the fact that somehow another year had passed, age has many wonderful benefits but the speeding of time isn't one of them.

My report isn't one of a simple regurgitating of meeting detail, for those interested in the minutia of Committee reports, these can be found on the web site, instead I wish to comment on the quiet revolution that has been witnessed throughout the council but specifically within the Audit Committee.

May 2017

Having bigged up the change element I have to start by reporting that I was tremendously honoured to be re-elected as Chair of your Audit Committee, with the very able Cllr Christine Collis as my vice chair.

Committee started as we were to go on by debating and agreeing to a fundamental change, specifically for our Internal Audit service provision and agreed to recommend to Council that MDDC appoint Devon Audit Partnership (D.A.P.) as our Audit Manager as from 1st May 2017, that MDDC join D.A.P. as a non-voting member from 1st August 2017 until 31st March 2018 and as a full voting member as from 1st April 2018.

This was taken to Council on 28th June and put to a full Council vote whereby it was agreed.

Committee had several reports to note and were also required to approve the strategic audit plan for 2017/18.

As a result of the above Cllr Ray Radford and myself attended a **meeting of D.A.P. at Devon County Council on 21st June**, this was to simply observe as the Chair of D.A.P. made the formal proposal for MDDC to be admitted as a new member, the current members being Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, Torbay and Torridge councils, it was unanimously agreed.

17th July 2017 (Special meeting) to replace that of 25th July

This meeting was also attended by Mr David Curnow of D.A.P. who introduced himself as the D.A.P. Internal Audit Manager to MDDC.

For the second year running Committee had agreed to convene for a special A.M. meeting to consider the annual report and accounts for sign off, having received all necessary officer reports and comment from our external Auditors, committee unanimously agreed to approve.

The above should NOT be simply read as another committee report being discussed and voted upon, the tremendous hard work and dedication of all members of our finance team should not be taken for granted, this was the second year running their hard work had provided MDDC the opportunity to submit our annual report and accounts on the first day available to do so, having achieved this for 2015/16 this was testimony to their hard work and dedication to duplicate that fete for 2016/17, this placed your council with those very few at the forefront of such an achievement throughout UK councils.

As your Chair of Audit I was delighted to write to all finance staff (individually) to thank them for their hard work.

September 2017

You will be aware of Council's decision regarding Independent persons and it was my pleasure to welcome Mr John Smith to the Audit meeting, Mr Smith was there to observe the meeting and give initial feedback to our senior management team, my understanding is this was more positive than negative.

Noting Council's decision to join D.A.P. I reported to Committee I had spoken to both Suzanne Kingdom and Nicky Chandler, our two MDDC staff that had moved over to join D.A.P. in order to understand how they had settled into their new roles, I was pleased to report both had seen the move as positive and saw a deal of opportunity available to them as individuals within the new organisation.

You will also be aware that many PDG's have agreed to have meetings in order that members can have an opportunity for informal discussion, it was decided that given the Audit Committee isn't a policy forming group there was no need for any such meetings for this committee, as with all Audit meetings a variety of reports were presented, discussed and noted.

D.A.P. Meeting of November 15th (held at Devon County Council)

Although a non-voting member I attended the above meeting as your representative

November 2017

As a member of Audit Committee I along with all Committee members are given the opportunity to attend training days that are provided (free of charge) by Grant

Thornton our external Audit providers, I was pleased to report my attendance at such an event on 24th October and a brief report was given along with copies of the slides provided sent to all Committee members.

On the subject of change, Committee were informed that after many years of working with MDDC Mr Steve Johnson was being reassigned to another council and Mr Andrew Davies was introduced as Grant Thornton's local representative to MDDC. Although this was simply an internal movement of staff for Grant Thornton it saw a very valued and familiar face move away from your Committee.

It had been my privilege to work alongside Steve, a man that in a very quiet and unassuming manner, had worked tirelessly and professionally helping and guiding not only members but officers for many years, another fine example of the unseen making a real difference.

January 2018

As with many committees January's meeting seems to be a catch up from the quieter festive period and many reports are available to discuss and note.

Therefore it had been agreed that the meeting would be preceded by a short training session lead by Mr David Curnow from D.A.P. The training consisted of Committee being able to discuss their role as your Audit Committee, how the role is NOT to debate past political decision or any political opinion, it's to examine how your Council can be confident in the assurance given to Council that we are managing our responsibilities in the correct manner, understanding and checking such assurances and challenging where it's appropriate to do so.

The above was seen as both useful and helpful and another session has been agreed pre the March 2018 meeting.

To conclude.....

My personal thanks must go to Sarah Lees, my Committee Clerk and steady hand and voice of reason and guidance without whom the seemingly organised role of Chair would undoubtedly be shown up for what it could be !

To all Committee members for their work and patience.

2017/18 saw another year of change not only for your Audit Committee by way of how our Internal Audit provision is provided but in a wider view saw the birth of the first of what I hope will see many opportunities, our special purpose vehicle, Three Rivers.

We have witnessed many funding changes that all seem to bring challenges to not only this but all councils, continued policy changes at central Government level many as yet to be fully explained let alone understood by way of impact that sees MDDC as are others looking to understand the extent of opportunities that may exist to meet the funding challenges ahead.

With that in mind I would remind you dear reader of my opening quote and remind all that tomorrow is formed today and Risk is part of the equation of success, not a barrier.

R Evans
Chair of Audit