



**East Suffolk House, Riduna Park, Station  
Road, Melton, Woodbridge, IP12 1RT**

# **Audit and Governance Committee**

## **Members:**

Councillor Geoff Lynch (Chairman)  
Councillor Edward Back (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Judy Cloke  
Councillor Tony Cooper  
Councillor Linda Coulam  
Councillor Tess Gandy  
Councillor Chris Mapey  
Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte  
Councillor Ed Thompson

Members are invited to a **Meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee** to be held on **Tuesday, 22 September 2020 at 6.30pm**

This meeting will be conducted remotely, pursuant to the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

The meeting will be facilitated using the Zoom video conferencing system and broadcast via the East Suffolk Council YouTube Channel at <https://youtu.be/Q1WhQBfbilM>

An Agenda is set out below.

**Part One – Open to the Public**

**1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

**2 Declarations of Interest**

Members and Officers are invited to make any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Local Non-Pecuniary Interests that they may have in relation to items on the Agenda and are also reminded to make any declarations at any stage during the Meeting if it becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is considered.

**3 Minutes**

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 June 2020.

**1 - 12**

#### 4 Item for Information - Rent Arrears

Further to the information shared at the meeting held on 2 March 2020, the Audit and Governance Committee is provided with the following update upon Rent Arrears for information only:

COVID-19 has impacted on East Suffolk Council's rent arrears profile and the process that would normally be used to tackle non-payment of rent. There follows a brief outline of each impact and any mitigating actions we have been able to take.

The largest impact came in March/April when lockdown was first introduced. We had an increase in the number of new Universal Credit (UC) claims in March/April due to people losing their jobs/income due to lockdown. As there is a 5 week wait for the first payment we did see a small increase in arrears during this period, however, this resolved itself when the UC claim was paid and we saw those new claimants paying their rent.

Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, a moratorium on evictions was introduced until 24th June 2020, this was extended twice more and is currently in effect until 20th September 2020. The Act initially introduced an extended notice period for Notices of Intention to Seek Possession, which are usually 28 days in length, to 3 months in length. This has been extended again in August and a 6 month notice period is now required in the majority of cases, and this will remain the case until the end of March 2021. This restricts the ability of ESC to take court action, which is part of our usual process. As such, we have introduced new methods of contact such as text messaging, and re-designed letters to improve our performance without court action.

We took the decision not to chase former tenant arrears at this time and instead repurposed officers to assist with new Universal Credit claims, to avoid placing undue pressure on households suffering the financial impacts of COVID-19 at this time. We will resume our usual collection process on 21st September 2020 to coincide with the date that court action is allowed to resume.

Despite the unprecedented challenges of the last six months, our performance on rent arrears remains high. Our investment in RentSense technology has meant we can quickly identify cases needing urgent action and focus resources towards them. We have been collecting weekly balance figures since the introduction of RentSense and are still reducing our arrears figures, with an average weekly reduction compared to the same point last year of £150,000 or 16%. Our Rent Officers have worked extremely hard utilising new methods of contact such as text messaging and video calls to continue to assist tenants who have fallen into arrears with benefit applications, payment plans and signposting to budgeting support.

	<b>Pages</b>
<b>5 Treasury Management Outturn 2019/20 and Mid Year Report 2020/21 ES/0493</b> Report of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources.	<b>13 - 24</b>
<b>6 Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council Concluding Annual Governance Statement Letter 2018/19 ES/0494</b> Report of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources.	<b>25 - 28</b>
<b>7 Suffolk Coastal District Council Audit Results Report 2018/19 ES/0495</b> Report of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources.	<b>29 - 71</b>
<b>8 Suffolk Coastal District Council Audited Statement of Accounts 2018/19 ES/0496</b> Report of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources.	<b>72 - 166</b>
<b>9 Waveney District Council Audit Results Report 2018/19 ES/0500</b> Report of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources.	<b>167 - 210</b>
<b>10 Waveney District Council Audited Statement of Accounts 2018/19 ES/0497</b> Report of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources.	<b>211 - 324</b>
<b>11 External Audit Plan 2019/20 ES/0498</b> Report of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources.	<b>325 - 374</b>
<b>12 Internal Audit: Annual Internal Audit Plan 2020-21 ES/0499</b> Report of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources.	<b>375 - 391</b>
<b>13 Whistleblowing Policy ES/0501</b> Report of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources.	<b>392 - 402</b>
<b>14 Audit and Governance Committee's Forward Work Programme</b> To consider the Committee's Forward Work Programme	
<b>15 Exempt/Confidential Items</b> It is recommended that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.	

## **Part Two – Exempt/Confidential**

**16 Exempt Minutes****17 Internal Audit: Status of Actions**

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

**18 Internal Audit Reports Recently Issued**

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Close



Stephen Baker, Chief Executive

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