

AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE

30th September 2009

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Timms (Chairman), Councillor Atkin (Vice-Chairman) and Councillor Ford.

Labour Group

Councillors Lane and Shepherd.

AS/10. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th June 2009 were submitted. An amendment was requested to record the departure of Councillor Lane just prior to the item on Section 106 developer contributions. On Minute No. AS/9, the Chairman clarified that he was referring to the Council's Officers. Subject to these amendments, the Minutes were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO SUB-COMMITTEE

AS/11. **GRANT THORNTON: ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT 2008/09**

The Chairman welcomed Kyla Bellingall of Grant Thornton, the Council's appointed auditors. He also welcomed Councillor Ford to his first meeting of the Audit Sub-Committee.

The Governance Report from Grant Thornton had been circulated and a presentation was provided on it. After the Executive Summary, detailed audit findings were provided, comprising the audit opinion, matters identified at the planning stage and those identified during the course of the audit. The report included sections on misstatements, disclosure omissions, accounting policies and the Annual Governance Statement. Further sections looked at the Use of Resources, treasury management, allowances and expenses and improving audit efficiency. Detailed supporting documents, including an action plan were also provided.

The Auditor reported that there were no material misstatements in the Draft Accounts. Some disclosure changes had been agreed with Officers and an action plan compiled to address some technical issues for future years.

The Auditor also reported a positive conclusion for the annual VFM Assessment, The Annual Governance Statement and was pleased to report a Level 3 Use of Resources score for 2009. The Auditor highlighted that this was good performance as standards had increased since 2008.

Members took the opportunity to ask questions and to seek further information throughout the presentation. These included asset valuation reconciliation and the revaluing of assets prior to disposal. Technical detail was provided in response to these enquiries. With regard to disclosure omissions, information was provided on how the auditors continued to monitor any outstanding matters. Questions were submitted on the Use of Resources, about when the comprehensive report would be provided to Members and the requirements for and the likelihood of achieving a level 4 under this assessment. For future years, it would be useful to have the comparative previous Use of Resources score. It was noted this had not been possible for the current year, due to a change in the arrangements. There was a discussion about Members' allowances and the merits of inclusive allowances. Clarification was provided about the Officer de-briefing aimed at improving audit efficiency. There was a related discussion about the identification of efficiencies. Details were then provided of how the auditors reported, on how the Council had addressed issues from the previous year's action plan. The letter of representation was also discussed.

RESOLVED:-

That the Sub-Committee accepts the Annual Governance Report for 2008/09 from Grant Thornton and the associated Action Plan.

AS/12. **MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

An informative report was submitted in response to a request at the previous meeting of the Sub-Committee for details on Member training. The report outlined training held over the period October 2008 to November 2009 and gave details of further planned training sessions. The Sub-Committee was also reminded of the decision to adopt role profiles and personal development plans for Members and advised of Audit Commission guidance on Member induction.

There was a discussion about audit training for new Members, providing refresher training for existing Members and there was a consensus that this should be done.

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

AS/13. **SUMMARY OF INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS 2009/10 (JUNE – AUGUST 2009)**

It was reported that the Internal Audit team undertook its work in accordance with the Council's Strategic Audit Plan. Reports and memoranda were produced for many areas, detailing recommendations for improvements in internal control. Recommendations were categorised depending upon the degree of risk identified.

The report covered work involving major systems and processes associated with Revenue and the main accounting systems. The Audit Manager reported no high level risks or recommendations with some minor issues being resolved during the course of the Audits. Details were also provided of those areas that Internal Audit were currently reviewing, such as budgetary control and treasury management. The service had also given advice on control and corporate governance issues.

RESOLVED:-

That the Summary of Audit Reports be noted.

AS/14. **HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE**

An informative report was submitted to provide an overview of the Council's recent health and safety performance, including an analysis of accident data. It reflected the Council's approach in enabling Managers and employees to understand and fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.

It was reported that a new Health and Safety Officer commenced employment with the Council in March 2009 and one of the first pieces of work was to develop a Corporate Health and Safety Action Plan, for which details were provided. The report detailed main achievements, comprising:-

- Health and Safety management framework
- Health and Safety training needs
- Electronic Health and Safety software "Assess Net"
- Completion of risk assessments
- Additional support to higher risk areas and activities

Finally, the report provided an accident analysis and further details were shown in an Appendix to the report.

A Member submitted enquiries on obtaining more details of each accident, those involving residents and tenants and about first aid and defibrillator training. A response was provided to each of the points raised. Questions were submitted about non-RIDDOR accidents and about liabilities where accidents occurred in tenants' homes. There were questions on whether all

accidents were recorded and questions about the Health and Safety policy statement, risk assessments and method statements. Again, further details were provided. It was questioned how Members could receive such information through policy committees and this was currently provided through end of year performance management reports. The role of the existing Officer Health and Safety Committee was confirmed and there was a consensus that more frequent reports to Members should be provided.

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted and that the Finance and Management Committee be asked to consider this matter providing further information to Members through the Quarterly Performance Monitoring report.

H.M. TIMMS

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 5.15 p.m.