

AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE

18<sup>th</sup> February 2015

**PRESENT:-**

**Conservative Group**

Councillor Harrison (Chairman) Councillor Ford (Vice-Chairman) and Councillor Murray

**Labour Group**

Councillors Dunn and Shepherd

AS/26

**MINUTES**

The draft, unconfirmed Open minutes of the Meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2014 were noted, for information purposes.

AS/27

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

AS/28

**TO RECEIVE ANY QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PRODEDURE RULE NO 10.**

The Committee was informed that no questions from members of the public had been received.

AS/29

**TO RECEIVE ANY QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PRODEDURE RULE NO 11.**

The Committee was informed that no questions from Members of the Council had been received.

**MATTERS DELEGATED TO SUB-COMMITTEE**

AS/30

**CERTIFICATION REPORT 2013/14**

The Council's External Auditor, Grant Thornton, referred to the above report and highlighted various points relating to the Housing Benefit Subsidy Grant Claim which, although late for audit, had been submitted on time. As was common in this area, the Subsidy Grant Claim had been subject to qualification. The Chairman queried the steps being taken to improve performance, matters addressed on page 12 of the Report per the Auditor.

Councillor Shepherd referred to the previous good status of the Authority's Benefits Section prior to the Northgate contract and queried whether the authority should consider taking the service back in-house. The Chairman referred to numerous issues that had changed since that event, namely the increase in claimant numbers, staffing resources and changing legislation. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services confirmed, in relation to claimant numbers, that they had peaked at above 11k, but were now in the

region of 10k. Councillor Shepherd requested that proof of checks / improved working practices be subject to future audit.

**RESOLVED:-**

**That the proposed action relating to the Housing Benefit Subsidy Grant Claim be approved.**

AS/31

**VALUE STATEMENT**

The External Auditor referred to the above report and invited any questions. None were received. The Chairman stated that thanks should be recorded for the work undertaken.

**RESOLVED:-**

**That the report be noted.**

AS/32

**INFORMING THE AUDIT RISK ASSESSMENT**

The External Auditor summarised the report and invited questions. None were received. The Chairman commented that required actions were seen to be being taken.

**RESOLVED:-**

**That the report be noted.**

AS/33

**INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT**

The Audit Manager relayed the main points of the Audit Plan delivery, stating they were operating near to schedule and that all issues were identified as low to moderate risk.

Councillor Dunn referred to the health & safety (H&S) standards at the depot, querying the moderate risk status despite the previously reported incidents. The Audit Manager stated his opinion as to the robustness of the risk assessment audit process, based on the evidence available at the time of its commission, but Councillor Dunn sought assurances on improved standards.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services opined that the recommendations could be agreed to, suggesting that a monitoring report be undertaken quarterly. The Audit Manager commented on the current stages of implementation of the outstanding issues, to be reported on at future committees. Three of the nine issues were listed for completion by March 2016, namely 1) Managers H&S training, 2) Operatives limited access to H&S information and 3) Procedural guidance for groundworks staff.

Members discussed concerns regarding H&S matters affecting the Council's outdoor staff and suggested that all operatives be provided with H&S information. The introduction of a H&S Committee, H&S Officer and a H&S training matrix was also discussed.

The Audit Manager ran through the remainder of the report. Reference was made to the lack of update in the Improvement Grant area (pg 73), due to no response from the officer concerned, who may have been absent at the relevant time.

**RESOLVED:-**

**The Chair tasked the Director of Finance and Corporate Services with;**  
**a) Reviewing the H&S matters as a result of the concerns expressed.**  
**b) Pursuing the Improvement Grant information matter.**

The meeting terminated at 4:45 p.m.

COUNCILLOR J. HARRISON

CHAIRMAN