

# Audit Committee

A meeting of the Audit Committee was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2006.

**Present:** Councillor B. Woodhouse (Chairman), Councillors Cains, Noble, Patterson, Perry, Stoker and Womphrey

**An apology for absence** was received from Councillor Cherrett

**Officers:** I. Jones, J. Bell, J. Davis (R); M. Henderson (LD).

## 167 Declaration of Interest

Councillor Fletcher declared a personal/ non-prejudicial interest in relation to item 4 – Health and Safety Unit Report 2005/06 as his wife had received treatment under the Back Care Programme.

## 168 Corporate Risk Register and Annual Risk Management Report 05/06

The Committee considered the Risk Management Annual Report 2005/2006.

The Annual report provided a summary of progress since the start of the enhanced programme, and a more detailed update over the last 12 months, together with the latest version of the Corporate Risk Register with amendments made over the final quarter of the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006.

It was noted that, in addition to the commentary on risk assessment and management activities, the report fulfilled important requirements in terms of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, as well as compliance with best practice in corporate governance as identified by CIPFA/SOLACE. The risks identified also served to provide assurance that the significant risks of the council were being robustly managed.

Members asked questions and discussed various aspects of the Risk Register.

RESOLVED that the Risk Management Annual Report 2005/06 and the Corporate Risk Register, as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006, be accepted.

## 169 Health and Safety Unit Report 2005/06

Consideration was given to a report covering the Service's activities and projects undertaken by the Health and Safety Unit during 2005/2006.

Members were provided with information relating to the following subject areas: -

- Health and Safety Audit – Inspections
- Sub-contractors
- Construction, Design and Management
- Health and Safety Training
- Involvement with external organisations
- Staff Development
- Reported Accidents
- Reported Assaults
- Back Care Programme
- Health and Safety Service Plan 2006/07
- Hand Arm Vibration Controls
- Weight Management

Members raised the subject of physical assaults and verbal abuse suffered by some Council staff. It was explained that such situations were dealt with according to the circumstances; each situation was different and, consequently, required different approaches. However, the Council's priority was always to protect and fully support staff when such situations arose. Members noted that a review of different registers, of potentially violent persons, and associated procedures and practices operating across the Authority, had been undertaken resulting in the development of a corporate Employee Protection Register. The register informed officers of potentially harmful situations by providing effective information.

Members suggested that the production of the Protection Register might have a positive affect on the number of assaults and reduce their number. It was noted that the 06/07 Health and Safety report might provide evidence of this.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and the proposed continuing course of action contained in the Health and Safety Service Plan 2006/07 be accepted.

## **170 Annual Statement of Internal Control**

Members were informed that the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 required all authorities in England to conduct a review at least once a year of the effectiveness of its systems of internal control and include a Statement of Internal Control within their Statement of Accounts. The deadline for completion of the Statement of Accounts for 2005/06 was 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006. The Statement of Accounts and the Statement of Internal Control would be presented for approval to this Committee on the 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2006.

A further requirement of the regulations stated that the Chief Executive and the lead Member of the Committee must sign the statement following full approval of the Committee. A key objective of this signing off process was to secure corporate ownership of the statement's contents.

The Statement of Internal Control included an acknowledgement of responsibility for ensuring there was a sound system of control and an indication of the level of assurance that the system of internal control provided. The statement also included a description of the key elements forming the control environment, a description of the process applied in reviewing the effectiveness of the system and an outline of the actions taken or, proposed to be taken, to deal with significant internal control issues.

The Council's Statement of Internal Control for 2005/06 was provided to Members. The Council had not identified any significant issues that were not being addressed within the Statement. It was explained that the Audit Commission, the Council's external auditor, had been consulted on the process and the identification of key internal control issues.

Members pointed out that certain references in the Statement did not reflect changes to the Council's Committee structure that had taken place in January 2006. It was agreed that Officers investigate this, and any necessary changes to wording be made in consultation with the Chairman

RESOLVED that the Statement be noted and any necessary amendments be made in consultation with the Chairman.