

# Audit Committee

A meeting of Audit Committee was held on Monday, 24th August, 2009.

**Present:** Cllr Barry Woodhouse (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Cllr John Fletcher, Cllr Maurice Frankland, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley and Cllr Mick Womphrey.

**Officers:** I Jones, D MacDonald, J Bell (R); P K Bell (LD).

**Also in attendance:** A Tetradis (Audit Commission).

**Apologies:** Cllr Mrs Kath Nelson.

## **A 23/09**      **Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

## **A 24/09**      **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 11th May 2009 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

## **A 25/09**      **Internal Audit Progress Report**

Consideration was given to a report on the work carried out by the Internal Audit Section and the progress made during the quarter April to June 2009 against the current Annual Audit Plan.

Internal Audit is an independent appraisal function established by the Council to objectively examine, evaluate and report on the adequacy of internal controls. This role ensured that there was proper economic, efficient and effective use of resources. It also ensured that the Council had adequate accounting records and control systems.

Committee Members were reminded that the list of all audit work undertaken in the period covered by this report had been circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting. The intention was to give Councillors the opportunity to raise questions on issues that affect their ward or other areas of responsibility and for answers to be provided at the meeting.

The appendices attached to the report showed details of the sections performance in the following areas:-

- \* Key Performance Indicators

- \* List of audits undertaken and number of recommendations made (2008/09 & 2009/10)

- \* Details of audits by Service Groupings (2008/09 & 2009/10)

The Chief Internal Auditor gave further details of specific audits where there had been a large number of recommendations made by the Internal Audit Section.

Members discussed the information that had been provided to them and were

then given the opportunity to ask questions on specific areas of the audits that had been undertaken.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**A**  
**26/09**      **Health and Safety Report**

Consideration was given to a report that detailed the activity of the Health and Safety Unit for the period 1st April to 30th June 2009.

The significant activity of the Health and Safety and the Well-being team was outlined, including partner and stakeholder involvement, accident and assault incidence

With regard Health & Safety Training 35 programmed training sessions were delivered to a total of 334 delegates, 2 programmed courses were cancelled due to low uptake and 12 further bespoke courses delivered within departments. Further details were attached to the report.

The activity of the Wellbeing Team was:-

No. of Back Care Referrals - 151  
No. of Sickness Absence Referrals - 163  
No. of New Physiotherapy Appointments - 103  
No. of Review Physiotherapy Appointments - 435  
No. of Work Place Assessments - 26  
No. of Return to Work / Occupational Health Assessments - 8  
No. of Client Assessments - 0  
No. of Scans - 2  
No. of Podiatrist - 2  
No. of Health Assessment Sessions - 11

Accidents reported to the Health & Safety Unit during the period were 24. This compared with 55 over the same period last year and with 32 in the previous reporting (quarter) period.

Physical Assaults reported to the Health & Safety Unit this period were 26. This compared with 25 over the same period last year and with 46 in the previous reporting (quarter) period.

Verbal Assaults reported to the Health & Safety Unit this period were 30. This compared with 11 over the same period last year and with 22 in the previous reporting (quarter) period.

The number of premises subjected to a health, safety and welfare audit during this period amounted to 42.

The number of recommendations provided to premises managers within this period to ensure a satisfactory standard of safety management safeguards was 91. Further details were attached to the report.

The number of Pre-Construction Health & Safety Information packs produced in

the period was 18.

During the ongoing monitoring and reviewing of the decent standards improvement schemes a total of 4 audits were undertaken with 6 recommendations issued to Tristar Homes Ltd.

Members had requested sight of the decent standard audit inspection recommendations and these were attached to the report.

Stockton Borough Council continued to provide a health and safety advisory service to the premises and employees of the former Teesdale District Council, post vesting day, until Durham County Council had completed their transitional arrangements. During the month of April, 5 days attendance was provided. On completion of the transitional arrangements, this agreement terminated on the 28th April 2009.

Members had requested clarity on Blenheim House, Residential Care Home personal emergency evacuation plans. It was confirmed that all personal emergency evacuation plans for clients who required them had been undertaken.

The Health and Safety Unit performed the role of Educational Visits Adviser in accordance with industry best practice as defined by DFEE (as was) publication, Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits 1998, BS 8848 2009 and the Learning Out of The Classroom (LotC) Code of Conduct. The role provided advice, training, challenging individual visit's safeguards and endorsing those arrangements.

In the first quarter, the safety management safeguards of 55 educational visits (37 domestic, 18 foreign) involving 1764 pupils had been appraised, challenged and endorsed.

This compared against 78 visits for the year 2008-09, demonstrating a significant improvement in the control environment of residential visits.

The Employee Protection Register was launched in July 08, and a total of 771 users were assigned to use it.

Since the EPR's launch, the search criterion had been extended, to allow data searches on post-code and date of birth.

Members were satisfied with the findings of the premises health and safety inspection reports and the Tristar Homes Decent Standards construction site inspections and therefore no further summaries of inspection reports were required to be provided. It was noted that the health and safety inspections do not routinely monitor the quality of the Decent Standards workmanship unless a risk to health and safety was evident.

Members discussed the information that had been provided to them by the Health and Safety Manager and were then given the opportunity to ask questions on specific areas of the work of the health and safety unit.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**A**  
**27/09**

## **Corporate Risk Register**

Consideration was given to a report on Corporate Risk Register Progress Report Quarter 1 2009/10 - Period Ending 30th June 2009.

Members were reminded that quarterly reports on the Corporate Risk Register were presented for the purpose of reviewing the key risks that had been identified as having the potential to deflect services from achieving their objectives over the next 12 months and beyond. They also set out the actions being taken to ensure that the risks, and possible adverse outcomes, were minimised.

Members had requested that, in the absence of substantial changes to the register, quarterly reporting should be confined to highlighting significant additions and amendments since the previous update, with a detailed report incorporating a review of the Council's risk management process being produced annually at the end of Quarter 4.

The interim report covered the period 31 March to 30 June 2009. All Service Groups had been consulted subsequently and the responses received showed that there had been some changes to the Authority's risk profile over the months in question. These comprised the deletion of two existing risks, the integration of two others and, updating of a number of the current entries. There had been no new entries to the register during this quarter.

The risks that had moved below the corporate reporting threshold and which had therefore been removed from the register were summarised within the report.

The former separate entries in the register for risks associated with Equal Pay claims and Single Status issues had now been combined in view of progress made with the Job Evaluation process and towards implementation of the Single Status Agreement making residual risks synonymous. The remaining changes this Quarter comprised updating of the general management information for individual risks, and the latest reordering of entries in the risk register were detailed within the report.

The total number of significant risks in the Corporate Risk Register had reduced from 17 at the end of March 2009 to 14 at the close of the current Quarter.

For purposes of record, the changes referred to had been incorporated in the latest version of the full Corporate Risk Register. This was available in the Member's Library and an electronic copy incorporating the supporting risk assessment details would be placed on the SBC intranet site.

Members discussed the information that had been provided to them by the Corporate Risk and Insurance Manager and were then given the opportunity to ask questions on specific areas of the Corporate Risk Register.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

