

Audit Committee

A meeting of Audit Committee was held on Monday, 23rd August, 2010.

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: A Barber, J Bell, P Johnston, D MacDonald (R); P K Bell (LD).

Also in attendance: C Andrew (Audit Commission).

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Kath Nelson and Cllr Ross Patterson.

A **Declarations of Interest**

24/10

There were no interests declared.

A **Minutes**

25/10

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 10th May, 2010 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

A **Audit Commission - Progress Report**

26/10

Consideration was given to a report from the Audit Commission that provided a summary of the progress on the audit to date. The report also highlighted key emerging national issues and developments.

The approach to planning changed for 2009/10 and instead of producing a full audit plan in April 2009, which would be several months before any work started, a letter would be prepared at the beginning of the audit year, with a detailed plan later. The 2009/10 fee letter to the Chief Executive and Audit Committee was issued in April 2009.

The initial risk assessment had been reviewed to update the opinion plan for changes since April 2009 and presented the 09/10 audit opinion plan to the April 2010 Audit Committee.

The audit of the 2009/10 financial statements was almost complete and the draft annual governance report was included on the agenda.

The work had been completed to inform the use of resources judgements and submitted indicative scores in April. Following the Government announcement in May 2010 that CAA would end, the Audit Commission decided to stop work on use of resources in local government as part of it's purpose was to feed into the area assessment. There would be no reporting of use of resources scores for 2009/10.

The results of the Audit Commission work had been used on use of resources to inform the value for money conclusion. It was concluded that the Council had arrangements in place for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Since the last meeting of the Audit Committee, the developments had

occurred that were relevant or may be of interest to Members were detailed within the report.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions and make statements on the report.

RESOLVED that the Audit Commission Progress Report be noted.

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27/10 **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 2010 against the annual audit plan.

Internal Audit was 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.

Members were reminded that the list of all audit work undertaken in the period covered by the 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 affected their ward or other areas of responsibility and for answers to be provided at the meeting.

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

Key Performance Indicators.

List of audits undertaken and number of recommendations made (2009/10 & 2010/11).

Details of audits by Service Groupings (2009/10 & 2010/11).

Members were given further details on a number of audits where there had been a large number of recommendations and were then given the opportunity to ask questions.

RESOLVED that the Internal Audit Progress Report be noted.

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28/10 **Corporate Risk Register Progress Report Quarter 1 (2010/11) - Period Ending 30th June 2010**

Consideration was given to a report on the Corporate Risk Register Progress Report Quarter 1 (2010/11) - Period Ending 30th June 2010.

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 31st March to 30th June 2010. All Service Groups had been contacted subsequently and the returns indicated that there had been some changes to the Authority's risk profile over the months in question. These comprised the addition of two new risks, the deletion of three existing risks, together with the update of a number of the existing entries.

The changes since the last reported position were attached to the report as follows:-

- * New risks added to the register.
- * Deletion from/amendments to the register.

The new risks added to the register were as follows:-

- * Continuity, failure, late delivery of the Building Schools for the Future programme
- * Nothshore Regeneration

A more detailed risk identification, assessment and management information for the new risks was attached to the report.

The details of the risks that had moved below the corporate reporting threshold, and which had therefore been deleted from the register was attached to the report. Also recorded were changes to the general management information for individual risks, and to the numbering sequence of entries in the register.

As two risks had been added and another three deleted, the total number of significant risks in the Corporate Risk Register remained unchanged at 11 at the end of the Quarter.

Members noted the changes referred to within the report and that they 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 was available to Members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

A **Annual Report on Treasury Management & Actual Prudential Indicators**
29/10 **2009/10**

Consideration was given to the Annual Report on Treasury Management & Actual Prudential Indicators 2009/10.

The annual treasury report was a requirement of the Council's reporting

procedures. It covered the treasury activity during 2009/10, and the actual Prudential Indicators for 2009/10. The report met the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local authorities. The Council was required to comply with both Codes through Regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003.

The financial year 2009/10 continued the challenging environment of the previous year, although the second half of the year did see the UK economy recovering, albeit weakly. The main implications of the exceptional circumstances had been deteriorating investment returns and continuing counterparty risk.

This report summarised:-

- The capital activity for the year and the impact on the Council's debt position;
- The reporting of the required prudential indicators;
- The overall treasury position of the Council;
- A summary of interest rate movements in the year;
- The detailed debt activity; and
- The detailed investment activity.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments on the report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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30/10 **Health and Safety Report**

Consideration was given to a report on the activity of the Health and Safety Unit for the period 1st April to the 30th June 2010.

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

1. Health and Safety training
2. Health and Well-being Update
3. Accidents Reported
4. Physical Assaults Reported
5. Verbal Assaults Reported
6. Premises Audited
7. Construction (design and management) Regulations 2007 (CDM)
8. Decent Standard Site Inspections
9. Educational residential visits vetted
10. Employee Protection Register Activity

With regard Health & Safety Training 18 programmed training sessions were delivered to a total of 198 delegates, and 17 further bespoke courses delivered within departments to a total of 306 delegates.

The activity of the Wellbeing Team was:-
No. of Back Care Referrals - 131
No. of Sickness Absence Referrals - 157

No. of New Physiotherapy Appointments - 112
No. of Review Physiotherapy Appointments - 481
No. of Work Place Assessments - 58
No. of Return to Work / Occupational Health Assessments - 9
No. of Client Assessments - 3
No. of Scans - 2
No. of Podiatrist - 7
No. of Health Assessment Sessions - 19
No. of Health Assessment Attendees - 478

With regard Better Health at Work Award evidence was being collated and work was being prepared on the portfolio to be assessed for the Silver Level in November 2010.

A total of 131 referrals were received to the Back Care Programme, from all departments within the Council and partners, requesting an assessment of an employee's workplace and/or physiotherapy or podiatry treatment.

22 employees had been recruited to become workplace health advocates to help ensure that the Wellbeing Team met the needs of the wider workforce. The Health Advocates would receive an initial half days training by the Wellbeing team on regional health issues that the Council needed to raise standards on. Following the training, they met on a quarterly basis with the Wellbeing Team for awareness raising sessions about forthcoming events and campaigns.

The annual programme of health promotion events for 2010 – 2011 continues with the following:-

August - Workplace health checks
September - Migraine awareness week. Know your numbers week.
Oct - Breast cancer month. World Mental Health day (10th).
Nov - World Diabetes day (14th)
Dec - World Aids Day.

A smoothie bike had been organised doing a tour of offices for Fruity Friday and had the Cardiovascular Nurses undertaking assessments on any over 45 year old employees. In June a week of health events was held for Men's Health week where male employees could come along to a number of drop in sessions for advice on male related health topics some men only fitness classes were run.

Following numerous requests from employees, additional lunchtime Salsa classes were held, with each well attended.

The first two Mental Health First Aid courses had been run with a total of 25 employees trained to offer support to colleagues within the workplace. In England there were on average 1000 people being trained up in the area each month, this was following a hugely successful campaign in Scotland.

Accidents reported to the Health & Safety Unit during this period were 44. This compared with 24 over the same period last year and with 67 in the previous reporting (quarter) period.

Physical Assaults reported to the Health & Safety Unit this period were 30. This

compared with 26 over the same period last year and with 21 in the previous reporting (quarter) period.

Verbal Assaults reported to the Health & Safety Unit this period were 21. This compared with 30 over the same period last year and with 28 in the previous reporting (quarter) period.

The number of premises subjected to a health, safety and welfare audit during this period amounted to 40.

The number of recommendations provided to premises managers within this period to ensure a satisfactory standard of safety management safeguards was 79.

The number of Pre-Construction Health & Safety Information packs produced in this period, were 18.

During the ongoing monitoring and reviewing of the decent standards improvement schemes a total of 2 audits were undertaken with 0 recommendations issued to Tristar Homes Ltd.

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 (LOTIC) Code of Conduct. The role provided advice and training, challenging individual school's safety management safeguards and endorsing those arrangements.

In the third quarter, the safety management safeguards of 56 educational visits (32 domestic, 24 foreign) involving 1740 pupils have been appraised, challenged and endorsed.

The Employee Protection Register, launched in July 2008, was an on-line data base of known perpetrators who presented an identified risk to the continued safety of Council's and Partner's workforce. The EPR had been successfully launched in all schools to provide additional security to Parent Support Advisers and other members of the school's workforce who may be conducting pastoral care or domiciliary visits.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.