

## **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**Monday, 1 September, 2010 at 6.00 p.m.**

**Conference Room at the Council House, Walsall**

### **Present**

Councillor Turner (Chairman)  
Councillor Chambers  
Councillor Douglas-Maul  
Councillor Robertson  
Councillor D. Shires  
Councillor Flower

732/10

### **Chair's Introductions**

Prior to the commencement of the business items on the Agenda, the Chair informed Members of the following: -

1. Further to Minute No. 698/10, the Chair reported that the Chief Executive had now provided a response to Councillor Chambers' questions and a copy of the letter was given to Members only for their information;
2. The Chair then reported that he had requested Internal Audit to provide the Committee with some recommendations in relation to a 'Payments List' at a future meeting;
3. Finally, the Chair reported that a revised Work Programme was being circulated for information only. This was due to the fact that a number of planned items had had to be rescheduled, resulting in them being allocated to different meetings for consideration.

Councillor Douglas Maul expressed his dissatisfaction at the tabling of documents and advised that he was of the opinion that this practice should not be allowed.

The Chair and Clerk advised that the documents which had been circulated were for Members' information only and not for discussion at the meeting.

733/10

### **Apology**

An apology was received on behalf of Councillor Rochelle.

734/10

## **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2010 and 21<sup>st</sup> June 2010 were submitted:-

(see annexed)

### **Resolved**

- (a) That the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2010, a copy having previously been circulated to each Member of the Committee, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.
- (b) That the minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2010, a copy having previously been circulated to each Member of the Committee, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following points being noted and Officers being instructed to respond.
  - (1) In relation to Minute No. 731/10, Page 6 – 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph down, Councillor Flower reported that he had not received a response to his question;
  - (2) In relation to Minute No. 731/10, Page 8 – 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph down, Councillor Flower reported that he had not received a response to his question;
  - (3) In relation to Minute No. 731/10, Page 7 – 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph down, Councillor Douglas-Maul reported that he had not received a response to his question.

735/10

## **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests.

736/10

## **Deputations and Petitions**

None received.

737/10

## **Local Government (Access to Information) Act,**

### **Resolved**

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items set out in the private part of the agenda for the reasons

set out therein and Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972.

738/10      **Review of the Effectiveness of Audit Committee**

Members were informed that there was no one present from Grant Thornton to present their report. In view of this, it was: -

**Resolved** that the report be deferred to a future meeting and that Grant Thornton be contacted to ascertain why there was no representation at the Committee.

739/10      **Value for Money Strategy – Presentation**

A presentation was delivered

(see annexed)

Colin Teasdale, Principle Corporate Performance Officer, delivered the presentation on the Value for Money Strategy and expanded upon the most salient points contained therein.

There then followed a period of deliberation which led to questioning by Members who wished to raise their concerns in relation to: -

- How Value for Money was assessed;
- How it was measured;
- If there were any benchmarks for comparison;
- What timescales were involved;
- How Walsall compared to other Local Authorities.

At the conclusion of the debate, Councillor Flower advised that there had been no mention of a 'Spending Transparency Scheme' within the Presentation and stated that he felt such a scheme should be an integral part of the Value for Money Strategy. James Walsh thanked Councillor Flower for his comment and agreed that it would indeed be beneficial if such a scheme was built in as an integral part of the Strategy. Furthermore, James reported that it would be a challenge for Officers to identify how to achieve this.

In closing, Councillor Robertson asked if there was any training planned for staff on the implications of the Value for Money Strategy. Colin Teasdale advised that there was training on the Strategy planned for later on in the year. In addition, Rebecca Neill reported that training on the Strategy was also included in the Procurement Rules training programme.

**Resolved** that the presentation be noted.

740/10

### **No or limited Assurance Internal Audit Reports**

A report was submitted.

(See annexed)

Rebecca Neill, Head of Internal Audit, presented the report on No or Limited Assurance Internal Audit Reports and highlighted the salient points contained therein.

Following the introduction by Rebecca, the Chair sought Members' views on how they wished to deal with the No or Limited Assurance Internal Audit Reports before them.

A debate on the matter ensued and Members concluded by agreeing the following: -

**Resolved** that: -

- (1) the contents of the reports be noted;
- (2) the four Social Care No or Limited Assurance Internal Audit Reports, namely: -
  - Home Care;
  - Community Alarm Service;
  - Homelessness Establishment – Dolphin House;
  - Inventories and Stock – Links to Work.

be considered in full at a special meeting to be arranged in the near future.

- (3) The Executive Director Social Care and Inclusion, be instructed to attend the special meeting with his relevant Service Managers to address the Committee and provide assurances;
- (4) That in future, the No or Limited Assurance Internal Audit Reports continue to include the actual Audit Reports and all relevant details;
- (5) The remaining 3 No or Limited Assurance Internal Audit Reports continue to be monitored by Internal Audit and regular updates be provided to the Committee on their progress.

741/10

### **Annual of Report of the Audit Committee**

A report was submitted.

(see annexed)

Rebecca Neill, Head of Internal Audit, presented the Annual Report of the Audit Committee and highlighted the salient points contained therein. In addition, Rebecca informed Members that the proposal for Audit Committee to report to Council was a successful initiative that other Councils had already undertaken. It was considered good practice, but also presented an opportunity for the Audit Committee to promote itself and highlight what work it had carried out as well as what it had achieved in the previous Municipal Year.

Discussions also focussed on what the latest position was with regard to the appointment of an Independent Member to fill the current vacancy. James Walsh updated Members on the current position and stated that he was currently in the process of resolving this matter. Members asked James to pursue the matter as they felt it was an integral and important part of the Audit Committee.

**Resolved** that annual report of the Audit Committee 2009/10 be approved and presented by the Chair at the next meeting of Council on 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2010.

742/10

#### **Private Session**

#### **Exclusion of Public**

#### **Resolved**

That, during consideration of the remaining item on the agenda, the Committee considers that the item for consideration is exempt information by virtue of the appropriate Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended, and accordingly resolves to consider that item in private session.

#### **Summary of item considered in private session**

743/10

#### **Submission of Corporate Risk for Scrutiny**

The Committee noted presentations by officers.

#### **Termination of meeting**

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 8.00 p.m.

Chair: .....

Date: .....