

## **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, 16 January, 2007 at 6.00 p.m.**

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

### **Present**

Councillor David Turner (Chairman)  
Councillor Rose Martin (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Albert Griffiths  
Councillor Desmond Pitt  
Councillor Ian Robertson  
Councillor Mrs. Doreen Shires

350/07 **Minutes**

### **Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December, 2006, a copy having previously been circulated to each Member of the Committee, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

351/07 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

352/07 **Deputations and Petitions**

No deputations were received or petitions submitted.

353/07 **Late Items to be introduced by the Chairman**

There were no late items to be introduced by the Chairman.

354/07 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)**

There were no items to be considered in private session.

355/07 **Presentation Re: Use of Resources**

Vicky Buckley made a PowerPoint presentation regarding Use of Resources 2006. The Council had scored an overall 3, with some scores of 4 within themes, and had achieved the highest aggregate score in the West Midlands. A copy of the slides used was handed to Members present at the meeting:-

(see annexed)

A copy of the key lines of enquiry for use of resources assessments in 2006 was also handed to Members present at the meeting:-

(see annexed)

Following questions from Members, it was:-

**Resolved**

That the presentation be noted.

Councillor Turner thanked Vicky for her presentation and asked that all those staff who had worked so hard to achieve the success should also be thanked for their efforts.

**Non-Executive Functions**

356/06 **Updated Corporate Risk Strategy**

The report of the Executive Director was submitted:

(see annexed)

Ann Johnson reported that this was the third edition of the Council's Risk Management Strategy and included reference to the Government's recent White Paper and the Corporate Integrated Planning and Performance Framework (CIPPF). She added that the Council also had a Member Champion for Risk.

The strategy had been agreed by EMT on 4 January 2007, and should be referred to Cabinet for endorsement.

After further discussion it was:-

**Resolved**

That the Committee:-

- (1) notes the content of the report;
- (2) endorses the revised draft Risk Management Strategy;
- (3) refers the Risk Management Strategy to Cabinet for their consideration and endorsement.

356/07 **Audit Progress Report**

The report of the Audit Commission was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Brian Warwick reported that the Audit Commission had given an unqualified opinion on the accounts and a positive value for money conclusion.

Referring to the overall score of 3 for use of resources, Brian indicated that this was an improvement over 2004/05 and was only 1 point off a 4. Audit work on specific grants had been completed with a significant improvement on previous years. He added that benefits and the Sure Start claims administered by Education Walsall continued to be problematic. A further report on Sure Start would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Turner felt it was important that the review of Sure Start Claims should continue. He was concerned that a major partner should be causing these problems.

Councillor Robertson asked when the Audit Report on Sure Start would be available. Brian Warwick replied that it could be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Martin asked whether the problem could be resolved with the issuing of the new contract for Education Services.

Brian Warwick replied that, in future, there would be only one grant claim made in respect of Sure Start, so the situation should improve.

Carole Evans reported that there had been a continued inability to meet the necessary deadlines. Help had again been offered to them, but had been declined.

Councillor Martin expressed concern that the administrators seemed oblivious to the consequences of their actions. She felt that, as a partner, they should be more responsible. Carole Evans indicated that it was hoped to build remedies into the new contract to tackle any such difficulties. Councillor Pitt asked whether Serco should be invited to attend the Committee to explain what had gone wrong.

Councillor Turner indicated that this option was being explored and that Serco were aware that, as a last resort, they could be called before the Committee to explain their actions.

Carole Evans indicated that she would check the present position regarding Sure Start and advise the Chairman accordingly.

**Resolved**

That the report be noted.

357/07 **Data Quality**

The report of the Audit Commission was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Brian Warwick drew attention to the main conclusions of the report and indicated that the information supplied to his Officers had improved significantly.

Councillor Turner requested that staff be thanked for the efforts required to produce improvements year on year and it was:-

**Resolved**

That the report be noted.

**Termination of Meeting.**

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 6.46 p.m.

Chairman: .....

Date: .....