

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Monday, 3rd March, 2008 at 6.00 p.m.

Conference Room at the Council House, Walsall

Present

Councillor Turner (Chairman)
Councillor Martin (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Bott
Councillor Clarke
Councillor Robertson

470/08 Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cook and Khan.

471/08 Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th January, 2008, a copy having previously being circulated to each Member of the Committee, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

472/08 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

473/08 Deputations and Petitions

No deputations were received or petitions submitted.

474/08 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)**

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.

475/08 **Internal Audit Training**

David Blacker made a PowerPoint presentation regarding Internal Audit training. A copy of the slides used was circulated to Members present at the meeting:-

(see annexed)

Following questions from Members, Councillor Turner suggested that the Benefit Fraud Team should be invited to make a presentation to the next meeting of the Committee and it was,

Resolved

- (1) That the presentation be noted;
- (2) That the Benefit Fraud Team be invited to make a presentation to the next meeting of the Committee.

Non-Executive Functions

476/08 **Internal Audit Activity for the 9 months ending 31st December, 2007**

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

David Blacker enlarged upon the report and drew attention to page 2 and the achievement of Internal Audit against targets. It was currently performing well against all targets.

In response to a question from Members regarding staffing levels, David Blacker reported that he currently had 1½ posts vacant.

Referring to Appendix 4, Councillor Martin referred to Prudential Highways and the failure to provide a performance bond and to the illuminations.

Councillor Clarke referred to New Deal - Economic Development. David Blacker replied that the audit had shown a number of good practices in place but there were a number of areas where governance could be strengthened.

Councillor Clarke asked if New Deal could be monitored regularly. David Blacker replied that a detailed report on New Deal had been considered at the last meeting of the Committee. He agreed to send out a letter requesting Managers to confirm that recommendations had been implemented and he would report back.

Resolved

That the Committee:-

- (1) Notes that as at Quarter 3 of 2007/08, Internal Audit has delivered on all of its performance targets, maintaining a high level of overall performance for the year;
- (2) Selects for detailed scrutiny the following completed audit reports:-

New Deal - Economic Development
Benefit Claim Examination

477/08 Corporate Integrated Planning and Performance Framework (CIPPF) - Refresh

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Helen Dudson enlarged upon the report and drew attention to the minor amendments arising from this year's consultation which included - the inclusion of feedback and learning in the diagram of page 10; the inclusion of the Council's vision in the diagram on page 15 and the importance of the role of Councillors on page 18. She added that the framework was refreshed annually and substantial changes were expected in the next twelve months.

Following discussion it was,

Resolved

That the Committee:-

- (1) Notes the contents of the report;

- (2) Endorses the revised Corporate Integrated Planning and Performance Framework (CIPPF) and agrees to champion the use of the framework by Members and officers.

478/08 Sure Start

A report of the Audit Commission was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Jill Edwards enlarged upon the report and drew attention to Appendix 1 containing the Action Plan on proposed recommendations. She added that there had been a real improvement in the handling of grant claims which had been assisted by amalgamation from 12 to 1.

Members felt that Sure Start was finally moving in the right direction.

Jill Edwards indicated that she hoped to see further improvements when the 2007/08 audit was completed.

After further discussion it was,

Resolved

That the report be noted.

479/08 Annual Grant Claim Outturn Report

A report of the Audit Commission was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Jill Edwards enlarged upon the report and confirmed that it was the final version, despite the fact that a "draft" watermark had been included on the pages. She added that a "clean" copy of the report would be provided shortly and highlighted Appendix 2 - Progress against 2005/06 recommendations and Appendix 3 - Action Plan.

Jill indicated that as only complex claims like Sure Start or Housing Benefit were being examined, some distortion could occur.

Councillor Martin asked whether there were any best of practice Authorities relating to Housing Benefit that this Council could learn from. Jill replied that Dudley had a clean claim and could be asked to share best practice with Walsall.

After further discussion it was,

Resolved

That the report be noted.

480/08 **Private Session**

Exclusion of Public

Resolved

That, during consideration of the remaining items on the agenda, the Committee considered that the items for consideration are 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 those items in private session.

481/08 **Submission of Corporate Risks for Scrutiny**

A report of the Executive Director was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Ann Johnson enlarged upon the report and stated that the risk had been managed by Margaret Wilcox, Assistant Director for Social Care and Inclusion, and was checked and owned by David Martin, Executive Director for Social Care and Inclusion. A robust Action Plan was in place. The current score of 15 was acceptable and could be managed down to 12.

Members felt that David Martin and Margaret Wilcox should be complimented on their handling of a particularly difficult problem.

Resolved

(1) That the report be noted;

(2) That David Martin and Margaret Wilcox be complimented on their handling of the situation.

(Exempt information under Paragraphs 1 & 8 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972) (as amended)

482/08 Internal Audit Activity for the 9 months ending 31st December, 2007

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

David Blacker enlarged upon the report.

Councillor Robertson referred to Internet mis-use and the amount of time spent investigating it. David Blacker replied that the situation had improved since the new policy had been put in place. It was likely that further action would be taken in only one case.

Resolved

That the report and Appendix be noted.

(Exempt information under Paragraphs 1, 2 and 7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972) (as amended)

483/08 Internal Audit Workplan 2008/09

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

A copy of Appendix 1 to the report detailing the number of days allocated to tasks was handed to Members present at the meeting:-

(see annexed)

David Blacker referred to Appendix 3 - The Internal Audit Charter - and indicated that this was the final version following discussion of the draft Charter at the December meeting of the Committee.

Following questions from Members it was,

Resolved

That the Committee:-

(1) Formally endorses the internal workplan for 2008/09;

(2) Notes the contents of the Internal Audit Charter.

(Exempt information under Paragraphs 1, 2 and 7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972) (as amended)

Termination of meeting

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7.25 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: