

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Monday, 2nd September, 2013 at 6.00 p.m.

Conference Room, Council House, Walsall

Present

Councillor Hughes (Chairman)
Councillor Illmann-Walker (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Chambers
Councillor J. Fitzpatrick
Councillor Flower
Councillor Murray
Councillor D. Shires
Mr. A. Green (Independent Member)

In attendance

James Walsh - Chief Finance Officer
Rebecca Neill - Head of Internal Audit
Ann Johnson - Corporate Risk and Project Manager
Charles Barber - Audit Manager
Rose Collinson - Interim Director of Children's Services
Peter Davis - Head of Community Care (Operations)
Santokh Dulai - Service Manager, Mental Health
John Beavon - Area Manager - Trading Standards and Licensing
Nicola Coombe - Grant Thornton

1085/13 **Apologies**

No apologies were submitted.

1086/13 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th June, 2013, were submitted:-

(see annexed)

Councillor Chambers referred to page 3 and Minute No. 1073/13 regarding Appointment of Independent Members to the Audit Committee. He indicated that he had passed the name of a possible candidate to the Head of Internal Audit.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24th June, 2013, a copy having previously been circulated to each Member of the Committee, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

1087/13 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Murray declared an interest in Item 13 - Risk Management Update 2013/14 and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

Councillor Illmann-Walker declared an interest in the Mental Health Trust.

1088/13 **Deputations and Petitions**

There were no deputations submitted or petitions received.

1089/13 **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.

1090/13 **Notification of any issues of importance for consideration at a future meeting**

No items were put forward for consideration at a future meeting.

1091/13 **Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000**

The report of the Executive Director (Neighbourhood Services) was submitted:-

(see annexed)

The Area Manager - Trading Standards and Licensing presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein.

Following questions by Members it was,

Resolved

That the Committee:-

- (1) noted the outcome of the inspection by the Office of the Surveillance Commissioner (OSC) which took place on 23rd May, 2013, the Council's response and that an update on progress on implementation of recommendations be brought to a subsequent meeting of the Audit Committee;
- (2) noted the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 and received assurance that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and procedures.

1092/13

Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Arrangements for the Protection of Children

The report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted:-

(see annexed)

The Interim Director of Children's Services presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein.

Members indicated that they were pleased with Ofsted's findings and the improved direction of travel in respect of protection of children.

Members referred to Paragraph 4.3 of the report and asked if the improvements identified by Ofsted had been implemented. The Interim Director of Children's Services reported that reducing Social Worker caseloads was being worked on but would take some time to complete. The other matters requiring immediate action had been undertaken. Those items to be dealt with within three and six months were being actioned.

Members referred to the PARIS system and the Interim Director of Children's Services indicated that it was no longer fit for purpose and a new system would be considered in the coming weeks.

After further discussion it was,

Resolved

That the Committee notes the findings of the Ofsted report into local arrangements for the protection of children and endorses the next steps proposed in the report now submitted.

1093/13 **Annual Report of the Head of Internal Audit on the Overall Adequacies of the Internal Control Environment**

The report of the Chief Finance Officer was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Members asked a number of questions regarding the report and it was,

Resolved

That the report be noted.

1094/13 **Financial Health Indicators 2013/14**

The report of the Chief Finance Officer was submitted:-

(see annexed)

The Chief Finance Officer presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein.

After detailed discussion it was,

Resolved

That the financial health indicators be noted.

1095/13 **Grant Thornton: Grant Certification Plan 2012/13**

An amended report of the Chief Finance Officer was submitted:-

(see annexed)

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the report and Nicola Coombe, Grant Thornton, presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein. She drew attention to the certification work fees which were reducing year on year. Referring to Appendix A to the report, Nicola Coombe drew attention to the minor amendments and indicated that a further report would be submitted in January, 2014.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

1096/13 **Officers Exercise of Delegated Powers 2012/13**

The report of the Chief Finance Officer was submitted:-

(see annexed)

The Chief Finance Officer presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein. He advised the Committee that no significant decisions had been made by officers under delegated powers in 2012/13.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

1097/13 **Private Session**

Exclusion of Public

Resolved

That, during consideration of the remaining items on the agenda, the Committee considers 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.

1098/13 **Risk Management Update 2013/14**

The report of the Chief Finance Officer was submitted:-

(see annexed)

The Corporate Risk and Project Manager presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein. She advised the Committee that Risk Number 6 - Workforce Planning Challenges, would be considered at the November meeting of the Committee.

Members asked a number of questions regarding the report which the Corporate Risk and Project Manager responded to.

Andrew Green (Independent Member) referred to the six high level risks highlighted by the corporate risk matrix and questioned whether officers should be concentrating on these.

After further discussion it was,

Resolved

That the Committee:-

- (1) noted the corporate risk register (Appendix 1 refers);
- (2) noted that a comprehensive review of corporate risk number 6 (workforce planning challenges) is being undertaken and will be reported to Audit Committee in November, 2013;
- (3) selects Risks 2 and 9 for consideration at the November meeting and 12 for consideration at the January meeting of the Committee;
- (4) noted the horizon scanning items will appear on future risk registers as appropriate.

(Exempt information under Paragraphs 1 and 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972) (as amended)

1099/13

No or Limited Assurance Internal Audit Reports

The report of the Chief Finance Officer was submitted:-

(see annexed)

The Head of Internal Audit presented the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein.

Referring to Appendices 3 and 4 of the report, the Head of Community Care (Operations) and the Service Manager, Mental Health, explained which of the agreed actions were still outstanding. Following a period of discussion, Members expressed concern at this and sought explanation as to why several actions had not been completed within the timeframes allocated.

The Head of Community Care (Operations) apologised to the Audit Committee and gave assurances that these actions would be addressed.

After further detailed discussion it was,

Resolved

- (1) That the Committee noted the contents of the reports and accepted assurances that weaknesses detailed within have been or are being addressed;

- (2) That the following Member involvement was agreed:-
- Councillor J. Fitzpatrick - Accounts Payable Audit;
 - Councillor Illmann-Walker - Declarations of Interest, Gifts and Hospitality and Overseas Travel Audit;
 - Councillor Flower - Community Mental Health Integrated Team Audit;
- (3) That Members agree that the 'focus on follow up with the option of Member involvement' remains the preferred option for the future consideration of this agenda item.

(Exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972) (as amended)

Termination of meeting

The meeting terminated at 8.50 p.m.

Chair:

Date: