

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Monday, 15th October, 2007 at 6.00 p.m.

Conference Room at the Council House, Walsall

Present

Councillor David Turner (Chairman)
Councillor Rose Martin (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gary Clarke
Councillor John Cook
Councillor Haqnawaz Khan
Councillor Ian Robertson

433/07 **Apology**

An apology for non-attendance was submitted on behalf of Councillor Chris Bott

434/07 **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meetings held on 3rd and 20th September (special), 2007, copies having previously being circulated to each member of the committee, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

435/07 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

436/07 **Deputations and Petitions**

No deputations were received or petitions submitted.

437/07 **Late items to be introduced by the Chairman**

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

438/07 **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.

Non-Executive Functions

439/07 **Internal Audit Activity for the six months ending 30th September, 2007**

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

David Blacker enlarged upon the report and drew members attention to the table on page 2 which showed performance indicators. He indicated that the service was on track to deliver against its targets at the moment. Referring to appendix 5 of the report, David expressed concern that the "recommendations confirmed as actually implemented at the next audit visit" had fallen from 79% in 2006/07 to 69% currently in 2007/08. he added that they should be very close to 79% again by the end of the municipal year.

Councillor Turner referred to the continuing problem with payrolls and asked for a report to the next meeting of the committee. David replied that a report and a payroll officer would be present at the next meeting of the committee.

Councillor Turner referred to the fact that much of the problem arose from systems failure and that the 99 recommendations which had been made had taken time to work through and complete.

Councillor Robertson referred to appendix 3 of the report and to the vacancy for an auditor. David Blacker replied that it was proving difficult to recruit auditors at the present time but an internal shortlist was being drawn up.

Councillor Cook referred to the sickness levels and asked if it they were becoming problematic again. David Blacker reported that sickness levels were creeping upwards again but robust measures were in place to deal with the problem.

At further discussion it was:-

Resolved

That the Committee:-

- (1) Notes that as at quarter to of 2007/08 internal audit had delivered on all of the performance targets: retaining a high level of overall performance for the year;
- (2) That electoral registration and new deal – economic development be selected for detailed scrutiny.

440/07 **CIPFA: Practical Guidance on Audit Committees**

A handout of the slides containing a PowerPoint presentation on the subject was handed to members present at the meeting:-

(see annexed)

David Blacker enlarged on the handout and referred to the CIPFA booklet which had been circulated to members of the committee.

Members were asked if there were any areas where additional training was needed. With regard to the audit committee and scrutiny panel roles and CIPFA's suggestion that audit committee members should not sit on scrutiny panels, Councillor Turner stated that there were not enough members to avoid clashes of this nature.

Councillor Clarke felt that the present system worked well and should not be changed.

Councillor Martin stated that audit committee scrutinised financial management, internal controls and risk management.

Councillor Cook suggested that new Councillors should be invited to attend the public part of the audit committee meetings so that they got an idea of what audit committee got involved in.

Councillor Clarke indicated that he would be happy to attend additional training sessions for members.

Councillor Turner reported that members regularly attended training sessions which ran for 1 ½ - 2 hours to avoid over taxing members and officers alike. Councillor Khan suggested that an induction pack or CD would be useful to inform new members. Councillor Turner felt that every new member of audit committee should be given a copy of the CIPFA booklet.

Councillor Clarke suggested that a training session could be held at the commencement of each audit committee meeting for a period of 30 minutes then the agenda could follow on.

Resolved

- (1) That the presentation be noted;
- (2) That the CIPFA checklist be considered at a future meeting;
- (3) That risk management provide the subject for the next training session.

441/07 **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 the item in private session.

442/07 **Internal Audit Activity for the six months ending 30th September, 2007**

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

David Blacker reported that the appendix revealed the number of days spent investigating each complaint or providing consultancy by service area.

Members drew attention to the number of times misuse of the internet and emails came up and questioned whether appropriate controls were in place. David Blacker replied that controls were in place and a new internet and email policy had recently been introduced.

After further discussion it was:-

Resolved

That the report and appendix be noted. (Exempt information by virtue of paragraphs 1, 2 and 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act, 1972) (As amended).

Termination of meeting

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7.00 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: