

Audit Committee Minutes

Date: 30 June 2016

Time: 7.00 - 8.24 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Saddique (in the Chair)

Councillors Ms C J Oliver, G Peart, G C Hall and N J B Teesdale,

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Hanif, Councillor A Lee, Sue Gill (Ernst & Young) and Maria Grindley (Ernst & Young).

2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 HEALTH & SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received a report which updated members on health and safety issues and key health and safety statistics for 2015-16.

The Shared Support Services Manager reported that it had been a positive year for the health and safety service with a low level of incidents. Due to a successful review the contract with Buckinghamshire County Council for the provision of the health and safety service had been agreed for a further two years to run until 2018. The Committee noted that the work programme for 2016-17 had been agreed and work was already underway to delivery it.

The Shared Support Services Manager highlighted that there had been an increase in the number of incidents of verbal abuse being reported by employees (mostly in the Housing Options Service). As a result, processes within the Customer Services Centre had been reviewed and actions had been put in place to support staff, including safety training, personal alarm refresher training, expanded guidance and improved signage. It was noted that incident numbers were still very small; however systems were in place to provide information on known offenders for employees.

RESOLVED: That the Health and Safety Annual Report for 2015-16 be noted.

5 2015/16 Q4 AND END OF YEAR SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Head of Finance and Commercial presented a report detailing services performance for Q4 and Year End 2015/16.

The Committee were provided with an update for 24 Level 1 measures previous identified by the Committee and an overview summary of all corporate measures.

Members made a number of points and received clarification of various queries as follows:

- It was requested that the information regarding complaints be provided in clearer format with more detail.
- Regarding measure BV78a, Time taken to process HB/CTR: new claims (days) - it was noted that the figure for the Cumulative Annual Actual figure should read 22.5.
- Regarding BV78b, Time taken to process HB/CTR: change events (days) - it was noted that the Cumulative Annual Actual figure should read 7.58.
- It was reported that the increasing figure of people in temporary accommodation was a national trend and at WDC there were a number of initiatives being undertaken to deal with the issue. It was commented that in comparison the demand for foodbank food parcels had reduced by 20%.
- It was reported that a reserve and annual budget was set aside each year for the cost of planning application appeals as these could amount to a significant cost. It was noted that information regarding the amount of approved planning applications and a timeline regarding developments that had not yet been built would be provided to the Committee before the next meeting.
- Information on the amount of empty properties in the area could be provided if requested.
- Regarding measure HR002, % of all calls to CSC answered within 20 seconds – it was noted that the cumulative annual actual figure should read 95% with a figure of 123, 908.
- It was noted that recycling figures were reducing. Members requested that a manager from the Waste and Recycling Service be invited to the next meeting to provide information regarding this issue.
- Members were concerned at the significant number of waste and recycling collections missed. It was noted that this was a contract performance issue and work was undergoing to address this problem.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Manger of the Waste and Recycling Service be invited to the next meeting;
- ii) That the 2015/16 Service Performance Q4 and Year End Overview be noted.

6 ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR PROVIDERS OF PUBLIC SERVICES - SELF ASSESSMENT

A report was considered which summarised guidance issued in December 2015 by the CSPL to help public bodies assess their compliance with ethical standards.

The guidance set out a template to undertake a self-assessment and to establish good practice. The draft template, which had been examined by the Corporate Governance Group and considered by the Standards Committee, was appended to the report. No areas of non-compliance had been identified although a number of action points had been identified to continue to maintain high standards. It was noted that these had been or were being progressed as overseen by the District Solicitor.

RESOLVED: That the self-assessment based on the guidance on ethical standards for providers of public services and the action points arising from it be noted and endorsed.

7 DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2015-16

The Committee were provided with a report which presented the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2015-16 which followed guidance issued in 2012 via an addendum to the CIPFA/SOLACE publication 'Framework for Delivery Good Governance in Local Government'.

It was reported that there were five areas identified for improvement, all of which had been included in the previous governance action plan, namely:

- Records Management
- Business Continuity
- Project Management
- Contract Management
- Performance Management

These would continue to be monitored through the Strategic Risk Register. It was noted that the signed Annual Governance Statement would be brought back to the Committee in September, as there was a statutory requirement for it to be considered alongside the approval of the statement of accounts.

It was also noted that this would be the final year for the report to be presented in this format.

RESOLVED: That the draft Annual Governance Statement be noted.

8 AUDIT, RISK AND FRAUD MANAGER'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Audit, Risk & Fraud Manager's Annual Report 2015-16 was presented and Members received an update of the work of the Internal Audit Service. The report included an update of audit reviews completed in the last year, including analysis of the responses of the customer satisfaction questionnaires issued on completion of each audit, and a detailed progress report.

The Audit, Risk and Fraud Manager reported that his overall opinion was that significant assurance could be given in relation to the core financial reviews undertaken. There was a generally sound system of internal control designed to meet the Council's objectives and that controls were generally being applied consistently.

He noted that regarding contract management three reviews had been undertaken and on conclusion of two reviews it was reported that further improvements were required and an opinion of significant assurance could not be provided.

Also regarding Project Management: the Council has yet to fully rollout its Project Management Framework. In addition a review had been undertaken on the arrangements for the Westbourne Link Road project, run in partnership with Bucks County Council and the results of that review informed the decision that an opinion of significant assurance could not be provided.

For the next phases for the programme, it was noted that a Memorandum of Understanding between key partners and a Project Initiation Document would be completed; funding would not be released until these documents had been agreed.

It was reported that reviews regarding Payroll, Food Safety and Saunderton Lodge management arrangements had not been undertaken and were rescheduled for 2016/17. Also a review of Hughenden Quarter had not been undertaken as the review of the Westbourne Link Road was undertaken in its place.

The Audit, Risk and Fraud Management highlighted that the new Corporate Investigations Team during the first year had:

- developed a Tackling Fraud and Corruption Plan
- designed a corporate fraud risk register process;
- offered and delivered training to relevant services;
- worked with Council services resulting in an increase of referrals from services within the Council that had not previously raised referrals.

During 2016/17 work would continue with key services to support them. Also the working relationship with Thames Valley Police had been formalised with the creation of a service level agreement and the team would continue to assist them with any ongoing investigations.

RESOLVED: That the Audit, Risk and Fraud Manager's Annual Report for the year to 31 March 2016 be noted.

9 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE ANTI FRAUD AND CORRUPTION POLICY

The Committee's approval was sought regarding the Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy for 2016. It was reported that the policy had been reviewed and no revisions were required. It was noted that the signed copy would be held in Internal Audit.

RESOLVED: That the 2016 Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy as attached at Appendix A of the report be approved.

10 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report which presented the proposed Internal Audit programme for 2016-17. It was noted that the programme had been compiled after taking into account the following contributions:

- The Council's Internal Audit service would continue to undertake the core financial audits necessary to provide Management with an assurance as regards the effectiveness of the internal control framework;
- Areas of interest from the Chief Executive, the Corporate Director, the Council's S151 Officer and the Heads of Service;
- Areas of interest as determined by the Audit, Risk and Fraud Manager;
- The contribution from members of the Audit Committee.

The Audit, Risk & Fraud Manager noted that a report on the implementation of the recommendations would be provided to members in September.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit programme for 2016-17 be noted.

11 AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Audit Committee work programme as appended to the agenda was considered by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Audit Committee work programme be approved.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED: That the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item as it contains exempt information as defined in Regulation 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, more particularly as follows:

Minute 14 – Strategic Risk Register

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information (Paragraph 3, Part 1 of schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972)

[The need to maintain the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure because disclosure could prejudice the Council's position in any future tender process or negotiations]

12 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER - QUARTER 4 MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the Strategic Risk Register for Quarter 4, 2015/16. The Audit, Risk & Fraud Manager provided specific information on various risks and amendments to the register.

It was noted that risk owners could be invited to attend Audit Committee meetings as required in order to provide information relating to the individual strategic risks that they are responsible for.

RESOLVED: That the Strategic Risk Register for Quarter 4 2015/16 be noted.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Steve Richardson	- Head of Finance and Commercial
Mike Howard	- Audit, Risk and Fraud Manager
Paul Spencer	- Shared Support Manager