

AUDIT COMMITTEE

13 DECEMBER 2012

Present:- Councillor M J Page (Chairman), Councillor D C Skeels (Vice-Chairman), Councillor S H Challinor, Councillor I J Henderson and Councillor M J Talbot.

In Attendance:- Head of Resource Management (Karen Neath), Finance and Procurement Manager (Richard Barrett), Head of Internal Audit (Steve Blake) and Democratic Services Officer (Janey Nice).

(10.00 a.m. - 11.30 a.m.)

18.. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Double (with Councillor I J Henderson substituting).

19. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 September 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MENTIONED MINUTES

There were none.

21. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 15.3 (IF ANY)

There were none.

22. THE LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME – PROJECT RISK ANALYSIS

The Committee gave consideration to a progress report of the Head of Resource Management which set out the on-going potential risk to the Council of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme. The Council had approved the Local Council Tax Scheme at the meeting of the Council held on 27 November 2012.

A number of issues were discussed including the legal implications and the possible non-collection of amounts due.

The Committee thanked the Officers and commended them on the way the Risk Analysis had been carried out and also for the quality of the information provided to it.

It was:

RESOLVED that

(a) the actions being taken to manage and mitigate risks associated with the implementation of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme be noted; and

(b) an update be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

23. REPORT ON INTERNAL AUDIT: APRIL – NOVEMBER 2012

The Committee had before it the periodic report on the internal audit function for the period April – November 2012 as there had been no report for the period April – June at the last meeting of the Audit Committee.

The Head of Internal Audit (Steve Blake) drew the Committee's attention to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) proposal to introduce a common set of public sector internal audit standards from 1 April 2013 and that CIPFA were planning to publish a guidance note on the new standards in March 2013.

Following consideration of the report it was:-

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

24. EXTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS – PROGRESS/UPDATE, AUDIT COMMISSION'S ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER AND GRANT CLAIMS REPORT

The Finance and Procurement Manager (Richard Barrett) updated the Committee on progress against recommendations made by the External Auditor, together with the Audit Commission's Annual Audit Letter and Grant Claims Report 2011/12.

The Committee was informed that the letter from the Audit Commission had informed the Council that there were no major issues and that it had thanked the Council for the positive and constructive approach it had taken and also thanks were given to senior management and the Audit Committee for its support and co-operation during the audit.

Having considered the report it was:

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the progress against the External Audit Recommendations be noted;
- (b) the contents of the Annual Audit Letter 2011/12 be noted; and
- (c) the Audit Commission's grant claims report 2011/12 be noted.

25. AUDIT COMMITTEE – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ISSUES AND DRAFT LOCAL AUDIT BILL UPDATE

The Committee considered the progress made against items identified requiring further action or responses and after a discussion, it was:

RESOLVED

- (a) That the progress made against the Table of Outstanding Issues and Draft Local Audit Bill Update, as set out in the Appendix to item A.4 of the Report of the Head of Resource Management, be noted.
- (b) That further updates from Planning and Regeneration be included for consideration at the June 2013 meeting of the Committee.
- (c) That consideration be given to introducing a corporate standard to the paperwork used to capture Officers' time recording to support good governance in this area.
- (d) That consideration be given to having a deputy in respect of Member representation on Outside Bodies.

(e) That the local procurement of external audit services along with any impact on Parish/Town Councils is added to the Table of Outstanding Issues for future consideration.

26. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Karen Neath, who was leaving her post as Head of Resource Management to take up another post within the Authority, for all of her hard work for Council especially through some difficult financial times and wished her well in her new position.

The Chairman also wished all of those present a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The meeting closed at 11.30 a.m.

27. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDED WERE URGENT

There were none.

The meeting was declared closed at 12.17 p.m.

28. TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ISSUES

There was submitted a report by the Council's Corporate Director (Corporate Services) which presented to Members the progress against outstanding actions identified by the Committee.

It was reported that there were no significant issues to bring to the attention of the Committee, with updates provided against individual items, as set out in Appendix A to item A.6 of the Report of the Corporate Director (Corporate Services). It was confirmed that the three items in Appendix A of the afore-mentioned report were a snapshot at this time and that the Committee would be kept up to date on the issue of the Council being able to appoint external auditors in 2017/18 and Mr Barrett gave further clarification on that issue. Further information was set out in Appendix B to that report that gave updates against actions identified within the Annual Governance Statement, again with no significant issues to highlight at the present time.

Mr Barrett also informed the Committee that the department had currently been working with insurers concerning a property risk audit.

Other matters reported for the Committee's consideration were the Code of Corporate Governance, how the department was dealing with fraud issues as identified in the afore-mentioned report. Mr Barrett informed the Committee he would report on updates as appropriate and include this as an item on future Table of Outstanding Issues reports along with arrangements in respect of the Garden Communities project that is currently being developed with Local Authority

Having discussed the contents of the report it was:

RESOLVED that the progress against the Table of Outstanding Issues be noted.

29. ITEMS SCHEDULED FOR THE NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE IN JUNE 2016

The Committee noted that the date for its next meeting was Thursday 23 June 2016 commencing at 7.30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, in the Council Offices, Thorpe Road, Weeley.

It was reported that items currently scheduled for that meeting included:

- 1) Annual Report of the Head of Internal Audit and Annual Review of Effectiveness of System of Internal Control
- 2) Internal Audit Regular Monitoring Report
- 3) Annual Governance Statement (including review of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance)
- 4) Corporate Risk Register (six monthly review)
- 5) Table of Outstanding Issues (including update against External Audit Recommendations)

The Chairman thanked the Officers and also Chris Hewitt and Kevin Suter for all the help, advice and assistance that they had given him and the Committee. He also thanked the Members of the Committee for their input and commitment to the work of the Committee.

Chairman