

Minutes



Listening Learning Leading

OF A MEETING OF THE

Audit and Corporate Governance Committee

HELD AT 6.00PM ON WEDNESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2008

AT COUNCIL OFFICES, CROWMARSH GIFFORD

Present:

Mr P W D Greene (Chairman)

Mr P Cross, Mrs M Davies, Mr M Harris, Mr P Harrison and Mr R Peasgood

Officers:

Mr S Corrigan, Mr S Hewings, Mr P Howden, Mr W Jacobs, Mrs C Kingston, Mrs P O'Callaghan, Mr H Oliver, Miss A Penn, Mr M Prosser, Mrs M Reed, Ms S Reid, Mrs S Truman

Also present:

Mr I R Mann, Cabinet member for finance

19. Minutes 30 June 2008

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes and the confidential minute of the meeting held on 30 June 2008 as a correct record and agree that the Chairman sign them.

20. Shared senior management structure – role of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee

The committee considered the report of the head of legal and democratic services on the role of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee in relation to the shared senior management structure of South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council.

In view of the scope of the terms of reference of the Joint Staff Committee, agreed by council at its meeting on 16 July, to manage the appointments process for the senior management structure and the safeguards set out in the report the committee agreed to recommend that council delete from the committee's terms of reference the power "to agree the changing of salary grades for any posts at head of service and above".

The committee noted that it would have an important role in relation to the shared senior management structure in managing the risks, the corporate governance

issues and the accounting arrangements for the new structure. The committee noted that its involvement in regard to redundancies and early retirements applied to South Oxfordshire District Council employees only.

RESOLVED: to

1. recommend council to delete from the terms of reference of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee the power “to agree the changing of salary grades for any posts at head of service and above.”
2. agree that the committee will have an ongoing important role in relation to the accounting, audit, risk management and corporate governance arrangements arising from the operation of the shared senior management structure as set out in paragraphs 11-13 of the report of the head of legal and democratic services to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee on 24 September 2008.

21. Statement of accounts 2007/08: request for late opinion

The committee noted the request to the external auditor (the Audit Commission) and their agreement to a revised timetable for issuing a late opinion.

In response to questions the committee was advised of the auditors’ agreement to the revised timetable. To date the council had not received notification that the delay would result in additional fees. The committee was advised that the auditors could issue an unqualified or qualified late opinion and that the council’s use of resources score could reflect the late submission.

The committee received an assurance that the necessary resources were targeted at resolving the problem and ensuring it would not be repeated.

22. Internal audit management report Quarter 2 2008/2009

The committee considered the report of the audit manager on management issues, the progress of internal audit against the 2008/09 audit plan and the priorities and planned audit work for quarter 3.

The committee welcomed the completion of unplanned audits and the provision of consultancy advice alongside the section’s delivery of the agreed work programme.

Adrianna Penn, Audit Manager, advised the committee that the CIPFA self assessment action plan would be presented to the December meeting.

The committee noted the report.

23. Internal Audit activity report 2008/2009

The committee considered the report of the audit manager that summarised the outcomes of recent internal audit activity.

The committee considered those audit reports that had identified a limited assurance rating (licensing and consultation) whilst welcoming the ‘full’ assurance rating for the Agresso audit.

In respect of the licensing audit the committee received an assurance that a number of the recommendations were implemented whilst others were pending awaiting clarification of the recommended actions. Claire Kingston, Head of Environmental Services, emphasised that a number of the recommendations could not be

implemented within current resources. An increase in the fee income could provide the required resources and this could come from increased fees.

The committee agreed to receive a further report at its meeting in November to assess progress on the implementation of the outstanding recommendations.

In respect of the consultation audit Sue Reid, Assistant Chief Executive, and Sally Truman, Policy and Community Engagement Officer, responded to questions from committee members. The service was now fully staffed and had the resources in place to meet the recommendations many of which would be addressed in the council's Community Engagement Strategy. Additionally the service now had responsibility for managing the consultation process across the council and would liaise with teams to ensure common procedures were in place and a register maintained to avoid duplication of work.

The committee agreed to review the recommendations in 2009 after the implementation deadlines.

24. Local Government Ombudsman's annual letter

The committee considered the Local Government Ombudsman's summary of information on complaints.

The committee noted and welcomed the reduced number of complaints and noted that none of these had resulted in a finding of maladministration and the issuing of a report against the council.

The committee noted that the council had failed to meet the target response time of 28 days and suggested that greater emphasis is put on meeting this target.

The meeting closed at 7.05pm.

Chairman

Date