

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
AUDIT COMMITTEE**

HELD ON THURSDAY 13 MARCH 2008

Present: Councillor G. Pinkney (Chair)
Councillors B. Bates, E. Bell,
G. Johnson, K. McGonnell
and B. Quinn

Apology: Councillor Mrs G. Bleasdale

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 14 February 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.
2. **INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR 2008/2009**

Consideration was given to the report of the Audit Manager in relation to the Internal Audit Plan for 2008/2009, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

G. Fletcher, Audit Manager reported that following discussions with the Internal Audit Managers from all of the Durham Councils, and on guidance from the Audit Commission, it was proposed that, because of work around the local government review during this year, a more flexible approach to audit work would be beneficial for all of the Councils and to the review process. It was considered that this was the best way to utilise internal audit resources.

The report outlined the areas that the Audit Plan for 2008/9 should focus on which would create surplus capacity within each of the audit sections. Assuming that current staffing levels were maintained, this capacity could be targeted to support other Durham Councils and to carry out specific audit work for the local government review.

Appendix A to the report provided a breakdown of the planned work for Easington during 2008/9.

There would be a number of audits that were ongoing at the end of March 2008 and these had been included in the Plan. Some of these were business critical systems, and with the agreement of the Audit Commission did not need to be examined again during 2008/9.

For the reasons given in the report the Council would not provide an internal audit service to EDH in 2008/9, which was to go out to tender, but as a significant partner of the District of Easington it was essential that EDH governance arrangements were examined, and this was included in the Audit Plan.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted and the annual Internal Audit Plan for 2008/9, be approved.

3. **EAST DURHAM HOMES LOCAL INDICATOR – AVERAGE TIME TAKEN TO RE-LET A VOID PROPERTY**

Consideration was given to a briefing note provided by East Durham Homes on the local indicator relating to the average time taken to re-let a void property, as requested by Members at the last meeting of the Committee.

M. Readman, Principal Corporate Development Officer reported that the result in respect of this indicator at the end of the third quarter of 2007/8 was 32 days (against the BVPI result of 42 days) and the year end result for 2006/7 was 49 days (against the BVPI result of 60 days).

She explained that the local indicator tracked performance of the actual time taken to turn around a property from it becoming vacant to a new tenancy commencing. The figure excluded long-term voids which had been delayed in being re-let due to lack of demand.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted and J Davidson, Assistant Director of Community Housing from EDH be invited to the next meeting to give details of the procedures for re-letting void properties and work carried out to improve performance.

4. **2007/8 BVPI DATA QUALITY AUDIT PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Corporate Development Officer which presented the outcomes from the programme of data quality audits carried out on a selection of Best Value Performance Indicators during 2007/8, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

K. Daghish, Senior Corporate Development Officer reported that the Audit Commission referred to six key characteristics of good quality data as detailed in the report. The agreed programme of audits focussed on a selection of the Council's BVPIs and the report outlined the criteria and the methodology for this work. 28 audits had been completed to date and a further 8 were scheduled for completion by the end of March 2008.

The majority of audits were found to be compliant with the definition of each performance indicator being followed as stipulated by the guidance. The report gave details of issues highlighted from the audits around non-decent local authority dwellings and rent collection and arrears recovery. With regard to the planning indicator relating to major, minor and other applications, it was reported that issues in relation to the input of dates highlighted during a previous audit had now been resolved.

To conclude, all agreed actions following the audits had now been put in place and a further report on the completed audit programme for the year would be submitted to Members following the performance year end.

Following discussion of the issues highlighted by the Audit Commission relating to non-decent local authority dwellings and rent collection and arrears recovery, it was **RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

5. **BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN SUMMARY DOCUMENT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Principal Corporate Development Officer on the publication of the Best Value Performance Plan Summary document for 2008/9, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

M. Readman reported that in accordance with the Local Government Act 1999, the Council had a duty to prepare and publish a summary of the Council's performance. It had been decided to incorporate the best value performance information with the Council Tax leaflet again this year. By doing this all residents were informed of the financial data around the new Council Tax bill, as well as the headline performance data showing the main objectives of the Council and what had been delivered during the last year. A copy of the leaflet had been circulated with the report for Members' information.

RESOLVED that the information given in relation to the production of the Best Value Performance Plan Summary document for 2008/9, be noted.

JE/CB/COM/AUDIT/080302
25 March 2008