

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

**HELD ON THURSDAY 10 APRIL 2008**

Present: Councillor G. Pinkney (Chair)  
Councillors E. Bell, Mrs G. Bleasdale,  
R. Davison, G. Johnson, K. McGonnell  
and P. Stradling

Apology: Councillor B. Bates

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 13 March 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.
2. **EAST DURHAM HOMES – VOID PROPERTIES**

Consideration was given to a briefing note prepared by the Assistant Director of Community Housing, EDH which provided an update in relation to turnover of void properties, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

J. Davidson, Assistant Director of Community Housing reported that the provisional turnaround performance for the 2007/8 year end was an average of 41 days compared to 60 days in 2006/7 and 84 days in 2005/6. This demonstrated a continued improvement in performance, particularly when the figures were examined on a month by month basis, as shown in the briefing note.

In addition to the improved performance in re-let times, considerable improvement had been made in reducing the number of void properties. These had reduced to a total of 145 lettable and non-lettable voids, compared to 490 in 2005/6 and 385 in 2006/7.

He explained to Members the measures put in place to improve performance which were set out in the briefing note, stating that EDH were committed to ensuring that this continued and was sustained.

A Member made reference to the standard of certain lettable properties. In response, J. Davidson explained that currently around 90% of properties did not meet decent homes standards and at present lettable void properties had to meet a 'void lettable standard' before being re-allocated. He added that he would discuss the specific properties referred to with the Member direct.

A Member asked how many of the properties reflected in the figures had been demolished. J. Davidson advised that the majority of non-lettable voids had either been demolished or disposed of. Non-lettable voids would not be re-let and were identified as 'non-sustainable'. Members were advised of the process involved in determining if a void property or an area was non-lettable. J. Davidson explained that this process was currently being examined to reduce the time taken to make a determination.

A Member asked what arrangements were in place with the utilities supplier when works were required to void properties. J. Davidson advised that delays in utilities works did have an impact on BVPI figures and discussions were ongoing

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with the supplier to reduce the time taken for any works to be carried out. It was also suggested that the Utilities Manager contact other housing providers to establish what arrangements they had in place with utilities companies.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

### **3. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT FOR 2007/2008**

Consideration was given to the report of the Audit Manager which provided an update on progress made completing the 2007/2008 Internal Audit Plan for the months January to March 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Appendix 1 summarised the following planned audit work completed by Internal Audit for the period. The aims and objectives of the audit were shown, together with the conclusions and any recommended actions agreed with the auditee:-

Cash and Banking;  
Loans and Investments;  
Creditors;  
Chairman's Charity Account;  
Assisted Car Purchase and Car Leasing Schemes;  
Risk Management

Appendix 2 showed a list of the planned audit work currently in progress, which would be carried forward to the next quarter.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

### **4. REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL AUDIT FOR 2007/2008**

Consideration was given to the report of the Audit Manager on the review of the effectiveness of the system of internal audit for 2007/2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

G. Fletcher, Audit Manager advised that in accordance with the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2006 the Council was required to review the effectiveness of the system of internal audit once a year and for Audit Committee to consider the findings as part of the consideration of the system of internal control. This supported the Annual Governance Statement (previously the Annual Statement of Internal Control), which in turn supported the Council's financial statements.

He advised that the review had been carried out and was based on evidence from a number of sources, details of which were given in the report. To support this a detailed self-assessment had been completed in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice 2006, as shown in Appendix 1.

Following consideration of the report, the Audit Committee **RESOLVED** that the review of the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal audit had been properly completed according to guidance and the CIPFA Code of Practice, and noted that the process would form part of the Council's Statement of Accounts.