

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Audit Committee held at the County Hall, Durham on Thursday 29 September 2011 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:

Councillor E Bell in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors C Carr, M Hodgson, R Ord, D J Southwell and O Temple.

Co-opted Member

Mr T Hoban

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Harrison, L Marshall, B Myers, and Ms K Larkin-Bramley.

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Consideration was given to all current items on the Committee's Action Plan (for copy of action plan see file of Minutes). Several items on the Plan were considered later in the meeting, the position with others was provided and dates were set when these would be reported back to Committee. The Plan would be updated accordingly.

2 Declarations of Interest

Declarations of interest were provided by Members of the Committee. A generic declaration of interest would be recorded as Members were school governors, members of various committees of the Council and of the former District Council's, and bodies such as the Probation Board, Fire Authority and Police Authority.

Specific declarations were provided by members on the Pension Fund Committee in relation to items 3 and 4.

3 Final Accounts

The Corporate Director, Resources advised the Committee of the current position with the final accounts. He had hoped that the accounts would have been ready for sign off by the Committee by the end of September. He explained the difficulties that had been encountered which had caused the delay, and gave assurance that they would be considered at a Special meeting of the Committee on 31 October at 11 am. The pension fund accounts and Governance Statement were complete, however would be considered by the Committee as part of the final accounts.

A copy of the accounts as they stand were circulated for members information (for copy see file of Minutes).

The External Auditor provided assurance that they were 100% confident that they would be in the position to provide an unqualified opinion by this date.

The Committee acknowledged the difficulties that had been encountered, and thanked officers for the long hours they had worked in producing the accounts. Members accepted the assurance provided by the Corporate Director, Resources that the final accounts would be considered by the Committee on 31 October.

Resolved:

That the position be noted.

4 Asset Register

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development (for copy see file of Minutes) that provided an update on the development of a Single Asset Register.

The Committee requested that the Action Plan and progress on the register be monitored by them in order to seek assurance that this will be addressed by 31 December 2011.

Members learnt of the corporate approach being undertaken to address this issue, and that future updates would be jointly with finance. The Action Plan together with an update on progress would be reported to the next scheduled meeting on 10 November 2011.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

5 County Durham and Darlington Community Risk Register (CRR)

The Committee considered a report of the Civil Contingencies Unit Manager (for copy see file of Minutes) that provided an update of Durham County Council's contribution to the Durham & Darlington Local Resilience Forum's Community Risk Register (CRR).

Councillor Carr raised an issue that the information provided at AAP meetings by the AAP co-ordinator, on the community input into the management of community risk, may have been misinterpreted by the AAP's. The Civil Contingencies Unit Manager would discuss this with the AAP co-ordinators.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

6 Partnership Governance Framework

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (for copy see file of Minutes) that advised the Committee of the Partnership Governance Framework and Durham County Council's involvement with partnerships and which partnerships will be included in the annual audit plan.

The Committee noted that monitoring and reporting arrangements are in place for the CDP and AAP's through the DIG, and bi-monthly report to Cabinet, and that further assurance would be provided by Internal Audit on the effectiveness of governance arrangements in place.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

7 Update on Duplicate Payments

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Resources (for copy see file of Minutes) on the actions being taken and plans to reduce the Authority's risk of making duplicate payments.

The Committee noted the staged review of payments that was taking place, and that every payment was subject to the review. A report would come back to committee when the next stage of the review (payments between £500- £1,000) was complete.

Resolved:-

That the recommendations in the report be agreed.

8 Annual Governance Statement for the year April 2010 – March 2011

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Resources (for copy see file of Minutes) that sought approval of the Final Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

Two minor amendments to the Annual Governance Statement were proposed as detailed on a document tabled at the meeting, (for copy see file of Minutes), following consideration of amendments suggested by the External Auditor.

Resolved:

That the AGS, incorporating amendments tabled, be approved.

9 Internal Audit Progress Report- Quarter Ended 30th June 2011

The Committee considered a report of the Manager of Internal Audit and Risk (for copy see file of Minutes) on the work carried out by Internal Audit during the period April to June 2011.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be agreed.

The Chairman agreed that in order to keep members informed the next item of business was urgent and could be considered.

10 Icelandic Banks

The Corporate Director, Resources advised of the position with the Authority seeking to receive funds following the collapse of the Icelandic banks. An update on the outcome of the court case, if known, would be provided at the meeting on 31 October 2011.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be agreed.