

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Audit Committee held at the County Hall, Durham on Thursday 10 November 2011 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:

Councillor E Bell in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors C Carr, M Hodgson, L Marshall, B Myers, R Ord, D J Southwell and O Temple.

Co-opted Member

Mr T Hoban

An apology for absence was received from Ms K Larkin-Bramley.

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 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.

3 Review of Operational Terms of Reference

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Resources that sought agreement to revisions to the Audit Committee's operational terms of reference and which presented a forward plan of business for agreement in

accordance with paragraph 6.1 of the terms of reference (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Manager of Internal Audit and Risk advised that paragraph 5.7 of the report would be amended to reflect the practice of members making declarations of interest at meetings, in that they were not required to declare individual declarations relating to memberships on committees at each meeting, and that a generic declaration on this could be made by the Committee.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be agreed.

**4 Strategic Risk Management
Progress Report for the Quarter period July – September 2011**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Resources which highlighted the strategic risks facing the Council, including the status of the corporate strategic risks, and gave an insight into the work carried out by the Corporate Risk Management Group during the period July to September 2011 (for copy see file of Minutes).

In order for members to be kept informed and seek assurance, the report on Contaminated Land that had been presented to Cabinet in October 2010, would be updated and presented to the next meeting.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be agreed.

**5 Internal Audit Progress Report Quarter Ended 30th September
2011**

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

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

**6 Report of the Audit Committee to County Council for the Period
April 2011 to October 2011**

The Committee considered a draft report of the Chair of the Audit Committee (for copy see file of Minutes) of the work of the Audit Committee for the

period April to October 2011, for agreement prior to reporting to full Council at its meeting on 7 December 2011.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be agreed.

7 Review of Internal Audit Charter

The Committee considered a report of the Manager of Internal Audit and Risk (for copy see file of Minutes) that sought approval to a revised Internal Audit Charter, which is the framework that outlines the terms of reference and audit strategy for the Internal Audit Service.

The Charter would be updated to reflect the request of the Audit Committee for it to be advised of any significant recommendations overdue. Where such recommendations remain over due the following quarter, the responsible manager should attend audit committee to provide an explanation for the delay.

Resolved:-

That the Charter be approved subject to the addition outlined above.

8 Single Asset Register

The Committee considered a joint report of the Head of Planning and Assets, and Head of Finance (for copy see file of Minutes) which provided an update on the development of a Single Asset Register.

It was pointed out that the work plan attached to the report had been prepared and sent out with the committee papers. Much work had been undertaken since then, and assurance was provided that the targets set were on track. Members learnt of the resources that were being, and would be input into this to ensure delivery on time. Any further updates to the Committee would be accompanied by an up to date work programme, being distributed on the day of the meeting.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be agreed.

9 Benefits Inspection Action Plan

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Resources (for copy see file of Minutes) that provided an update on the status of the Benefits

Inspection Action Plan (BIAP) and which set out how the performance of the Benefits Service is being monitored and managed, now and going forward.

The Head of Finance (Financial Services) emphasised the importance that this was being given by the Authority, and members were given an update on the processes and timescales involved in moving to one new system.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be agreed.

10 Audit Commission Procurement Strategy

The External Auditor advised of the procurement processes in place for local authorities, fire authorities, and police authorities in securing external auditors for the future.

Resolved:

The Committee noted the position.