

MINUTES of the meeting of Audit and Corporate Governance Committee held at : Council Chamber, Town Hall, Hereford on Friday, 19th January, 2007 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor A.C.R. Chappell (Chairman)

Councillors: A.C.R. Chappell, T.M. James and R.I. Matthews and Ms G. Powell

In attendance: Mr T Tobin and R.M. Wilson (ex-officio)

22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Mrs. P.A.Andrews, H. Bramer and J.G.Jarvis.

23. NAMED SUBSTITUTES(IF ANY)

Councillor Mrs.G.Powell substituted for Councillor S.R.Robertson.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

25. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th December, 2006 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26. AUDIT COMMISSION USE OF RESOURCES REPORT

The Director of Resources presented a report which updated the Committee on the Audit Commission's report in respect of the Council's Use of Resources. Although giving a positive assessment overall, the Audit Commission's report highlighted the need for improvement in certain areas. The Director of Resources indicated that these areas of concern were currently being addressed in the form of an action plan and that good progress was being made with the aim that improvements and efficiencies would be worked into service delivery plans. Mr.T.Tobin, Audit Commission, endorsed the good progress being made and indicated that the improvements would translate into improved assessment scores in due course.

Mr.T.Ford, Audit Services Manager, informed the Committee that a final version of the Use of Resources Auditor Judgements will be submitted to the Committee.

In referring to the Audit Commission's focus on Members' disclosures in respect of gifts and hospitality, Mr.T.Tobin informed the Committee that the Audit Commission would be arranging a seminar for Members in the near future on the subject.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

27. AUDIT SERVICES UPDATED INTERIM ASSURANCE REPORT

The Audit Services Manager, presented a report which updated the Committee on work status with regard to the Interim Assurance report and also brought to Members' attention key control issues. He informed the Committee that an update would be submitted to the next meeting on progress on developing guidance for teachers in respect of Criminal Records Bureau checks. With regard Information Communications Technology (ICT), Financial Management Systems and Procurement, the Head of ICT had signed off the action plan.

Discussion ensued in relation to Members and officers telephone usage. Members were informed that Audit Services had completed an audit on telephones with recommendations.

RESOLVED:

THAT (a) the report be noted; and

(b) a report be submitted to the next meeting on the audit recommendations made in relation to telephones.

28. CLIX ICT SYSTEM REVIEW - RECOMMENDATION FOLLOW UP

The Audit Services Manager presented a report which updated the Committee on the current status of the audit recommendations that had been made in respect of the functionality and security of the Client Index System.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

29. BENEFITS CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND BENEFIT CHANGES APRIL 2007

The Head of Benefit and Exchequer Services presented a report which advised the Committee on the Benefit Fraud Inspectorates Corporate Performance Assessment report and the Benefit Intervention changes.

The Committee noted the progress and improvements made in respect of restructuring, processes and performance and the expectancy of achieving an improved Corporate Performance assessment in 2007.

The Principal Audit Manager informed Members that Housing Benefit is reviewed annually and that a report would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

RESOLVED: That the 2006 Benefit Corporate Performance Assessment rating and the Benefit changes, effective from April 2007, be noted.

30. MANAGING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Head of Policy and Performance presented a report to Committee which detailed the Council's response to the recommendations of the recent audit of performance management. An action plan had been developed and was attached to the report as Appendix 1. He stated that there would be additions to the plan in future and that its nature was such that it would be on going and would evolve as time progressed. He emphasized that the Council's response to the recommendations needed to be robust and capable of taking the Council forward to a position of achieving fundamental service improvement over the next year.

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The Director of Resources stated that performance would be monitored through the Council's budgets, savings, investment and its corporate governance framework and that these procedures and arrangements would indicate how efficiencies are being achieved. Regular update reports would be submitted to the Committee.

Mr.P.Morgan, Audit Commission, informed the Committee that although generally, performance management was not as well developed as other comparable authorities, the Council's action plans that had been put in place and the current proposals before the Committee was good. He emphasized the need to embed performance processes at all points of the Council, individually and from a team ethic viewpoint. He endorsed the way in which performance management issues were being addressed and the Council's positive response to achieve its aims.

RESOLVED: That the action plan at Appendix I to the report be approved and, subject to final drafting amendments, be submitted to the Audit Commission as the Council's response to the recent audit of its performance management arrangements.

The meeting ended at 3.18 p.m.

CHAIRMAN