

## **AUDIT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 5 July 2001**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Audit Services Committee** held on **5 July 2001** when there were present:

Cllr J R F Mason (Chairman)  
Cllr Mrs J Hall (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr C Black  
Cllr G Fox  
Cllr J E Grey

Cllr D R Helson  
Cllr P D Stebbing  
Cllr P F A Webster

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllrs G A Mockford, Mrs R Brown

### **SUBSTITUTES**

Cllr R Adams

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

P Warren - Chief Executive  
R Crofts - Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)  
Mrs T Metcalf - Audit and Process Review Manager  
Mrs N Bishop - Principal Auditor  
Mrs M Martin - Committee Administrator

### **243 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2001 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

### **244 OUTSTANDING ISSUES**

The Committee noted the progress of the Outstanding Issues, together with the following update:-

#### **Housing Benefit Verification (Minute 297 - 5 October 2000)**

The Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) confirmed that allowance had been made for this in the Budget. Failure to comply with this could result in a Council being penalised. Members noted that the way the benefit subsidy is paid is currently under review. A report on this would be brought to Members, once further information becomes available.

### **245 BENCHMARKING AUDIT SERVICES**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which informed Members of the results following a benchmarking exercise of the Council's internal Audit Services. It also showed the results of the internal audit questionnaire issued to Heads of Service and Managers.

Three other local authorities had participated with the exercise and it had been agreed that they would remain anonymous for reporting purposes. These results provided an indication of areas that needed further discussion and analysis.

Officers confirmed that the term 'non-productive' time related to such things as annual leave, courses of study and administration. All other work would fall in the category of 'productive' time.

During Member discussion, the following was noted:-

- the definitions in appendix 1 needed refining.
- disappointment that in appendix 2 some officers had not responded to certain questions, although this could have been because there had been no recent experience of an Audit in their work area.
- there was a need to determine what issues had led to the response of 'unacceptable' and to resolve these matters.
- the low score on point 7 was due to the fact that Audit staff were still in the learning process, therefore more time was allocated to background reading.
- the benchmarking process in general takes a considerable commitment of time.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That, subject to a detailed analysis of the responses made in Appendix 2 to the report, the information contained in the benchmarking exercise be noted.
- (2) That the further work outlined in the report as part of the monitoring of the Internal Audit process be agreed.
- (3) That the Audit & Process Review Manager reviews the audit planning process and monitoring system. (CEX)

## **246 MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which drew Members' attention to the latest Audit Commission publications and suggested best practice. A summary of these had been appended to the report.

The recommendations of the external auditors, including Best Value and Value for Money reports, and the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate had also been appended in order that they may be monitored by this Committee, together with an update of the progress made to date. A further report would be brought to Members.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the additional Audit Commission publications be acknowledged and the recommended best practice arising from them be noted.
- (2) That the updated monitoring sheet for the Audit Commission publications be agreed.
- (3) That the monitoring sheet for the external audit recommendations, including the value for money reports, be agreed.
- (4) That the monitoring sheet for the Best Value Performance Plan recommendations be agreed.
- (5) That the monitoring sheet for the BFI recommendations be agreed.  
(CEx)

**Resolved**

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

**247 AUDIT REPORT**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Chief Executive which drew Members' attention to the completed audit investigations and provided Members with an update of audit recommendations.

Members noted that the 2000/2001 audits on Communications and Financial Management/Budgetary Control had been completed and would be presented to the October meeting of this Committee.

The Chief Executive confirmed that within the Modernising Agenda, the terms of reference of the Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee would largely encompass the current work of this Committee.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the recommendations from the audit reports listed be agreed, together with the updated information on the audit recommendations, subject to:-
  - (i) Members being updated at the next meeting of the Audit Services Committee on the latest position in the anticipated process review in relation to Debtors.

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- (ii) the consideration of the Audit Summary on Car Parks being deferred until Members have considered the full report at the next meeting of the Audit Services Committee.
- (2) That the Contract Management Review Working Group be requested to produce a Contracts Best Practice Procedure Guide.
- (3) That in noting the increase in performance in relation to the collection of Housing Rents, Members requested that the relevant officers be congratulated. (CEX)

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....