

Minutes

Meeting of : Audit Committee
Meeting held in : Meeting Room, City Hall, Salisbury
Date : Tuesday 16 January 2007
Commencing at : 10.00 am

Present:

Mr P Downing (independent person) – **Vice Chairman** (in the Chair)

Councillors J M Collier and A G Peach

Councillor D A Culver was in attendance as an observer

Officers

James Chamberlain and Steve Milton (Democratic Services), Graham Creasey, David Crook, Diana Melville

Also present

Peter Brown (Audit Commission)

Apologies

Mrs J Clarkson JP (independent person), Councillors R Britton, P D Edge, and K C Wren.

93. Public Questions/Statement Time:

There were none.

94. Councillor Questions/Statement Time:

There were none.

95. Minutes:

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2006 (previously circulated) be approved and signed by the Chairman.



Awarded in:
Housing Services
Waste and Recycling Services



96. Declarations of Interest:

There were none.

97. Chairman's Announcements/Questions:

Mr Downing informed the Committee that following the request for the Head of IT Services to report to this meeting, discussion had taken place between the Chair, Chief Auditor and Democratic Services on the timing of the meeting.

98. Auditor's Report on the Best Value Performance Plan:

Mr Brown of the Audit Commission introduced the above previously circulated report to the Committee which noted that the District Auditor had not identified any matters to report to the authority, or made any recommendations on procedures in relation to the plan.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

99. Office Centralisation Project - Update:

The Committee received a verbal update from the Property Services Manager. The Committee was informed that various measures had been put in place to protect the IT equipment, stored in the server room, during the building works. These included the installation of a steel cage to protect the IT equipment from dust, vibration and falling objects, the installation of a water detection device under the floor of the server room, the installation of a waterproof membrane in the floor above, and the erection of a temporary roof over the whole building once the main works had started.

A porta-cabin previously housed at the rear of the building had now been moved to the front, to allow IT technicians to be as close to the server room as possible during the works. The server room itself would be locked, with access limited by swipe card. To safeguard the equipment against dust, all openings would be taped, and fans would be installed to maintain positive pressure. Vibration in the server room would be limited due to the fact that the room had been built on a raised floor. Data cables had been re-routed in newly dug trenches in the forecourt of the building to ensure they were not damaged by the construction work.

The Acting Chief Executive stated that, in light of the above measures, managers would now regard the risk as lower.

Resolved – that the above be noted.

100. Annual Review of Corporate Governance:

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Internal Auditor (previously circulated). The clerk drew the Committee's attention to those areas within the remit of the Standards Committee, which would also need to be reported to the Standards Committee. Councillor Collier suggested that Salisbury District Council should be an exemplary authority in considering how partnerships should be incorporated into the new code of corporate governance. The Acting Chief Executive stated that the review of the ethical governance in 2007/08 would be beneficial given that it was likely a number of new councillors would be elected in the May 2007 local elections. Members expressed reservations about the cost of the work but concluded that they would be happy to support it.

Resolved – that the above be noted.

101. Corporate Risk Management:

The Committee considered the report of the Risk Management Group (previously circulated). The members questioned the financial effects from two events happening together, namely the Stock Transfer rejection and the increased costs of the Office Centralisation project. The Acting Chief Executive reported that the costs of the Office Centralisation were still within the planned parameters. It was mentioned that Wiltshire County Council would probably bid for unitary status but the rules about the imposition of this on District Councils was very unclear. It was not felt that there was a significant risk for the Office Centralisation scheme because the city would remain an important hub in the provision of local services. However the rejection of the Housing Stock Transfer would pose difficult financial challenges. Management and the Cabinet were addressing these financial issues.

Resolved – that the above be noted.

102. Effective Audit Committees Training:

The Committee received a verbal report from the Vice-Chairman, Mr Downing, on the above training. Mr Downing informed the Committee that in Mrs Clarkson's view, the Audit Commission's training was not advanced enough for Salisbury, in that the Council already had an Audit Committee. Members noted that it would be preferable to postpone any decision on training until after the May 2007 local elections, when it would be possible to examine the specific training needs of Members appointed to the Committee. Members expressed a preference for the training provided by CIPFA.

Resolved – that the decision on Audit Committees training be deferred until after the May 2007 local elections, and at that time for consideration to be given to using CIPFA training courses.

104. Date of the Next Meeting:

10.00 am on Wednesday 4 April 2007 in the City Hall Meeting Room

The meeting concluded at 11:15 am