

Democratic Services
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Minutes

Meeting of : Audit Committee
Meeting held in : The Meeting Room, City Hall, Salisbury
Date : Wednesday 04 February 2009
Commencing at : 6.00 pm

Present:

Mrs J Clarkson JP (Independent Member) – Chairman
Mr P Downing (Independent Member) – Vice-Chairman

Councillors C Devine, J P King, D J Luther and I M Mitchell.

Officers: Alan Osborne (Head of Financial Services) Tim Revell (Interim Head of Democratic Services), Estelle Sherry (Audit Manager) and Frank Dick (Interim Performance Director).

85. Public Questions:

There were none.

86. Councillor Questions/Statement Time:

There were none.

87. Minutes:

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2008 be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman subject to the addition of Councillor Devine's apology for absence and clarification in minute 78 that the briefing note concerned the role of the committee in relation to the definition of those charged with governance.

88. Declarations of Interest:

There were none.

89. Chairman's Announcements/Questions:

The Chairman advised the committee that this was its last scheduled meeting before vesting day for the unitary authority and expressed her thanks to members and officers for their contribution to the work of the committee and the support they had given.



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90. Internal Audit – Nine Month Update:

The committee considered the previously circulated report of the Audit Manager and were briefed on specific issues raised by members.

Resolved: that the revisions to the audit plan for 2008/09 as shown in Appendix A of the report be approved and the audit work for the third quarter of 2008/09 be noted subject to

- the committee's concern that the assurances about the functionality of the IT interfaces between the new SAP system and existing Salisbury systems were lacking in robustness
- continued concern about the limited assurance for the payroll system

91. Risk Management in Wiltshire Council:

The committee considered the previously circulated report of the Performance Director setting out the proposed risk management strategy for Wiltshire Council. The committee had concerns about some aspects of the approach proposed and

Resolved – that the following views be conveyed to Wiltshire Council:

- there should be an independent element in the risk management process as the use of appropriate external expertise should result in more robust arrangements. This could be achieved through including in the Corporate Risk Management Group independent experts on individual areas of risk management. Recent events have made it clear that there is benefit in widening such discussion beyond members and officers;
- the approach should ensure that risk management was integral to the main business of the authority and not seen as a separate function;
- the roles of the various risk management groups lacked clarity;
- the distinction between ownership of risks and operational responsibility for alleviating them should be made clear;
- the risk appetite of the community should be factored into the assessment of risks;
- the distinct roles of the senior member and the corporate director should be made explicit.

92. Update on the LGR:

The committee received a verbal update from the Head of Financial Services.

Resolved: to note that:

- an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) reflecting the position at 31 March 2009 was likely to be required and preparatory work on this had begun. The AGS would be circulated to members of the committee before being considered by the council;
- the recruitment process was proceeding at a different pace in each of the 26 service directorates and in those dealing with central professional and support services was not well advanced;
- the Implementation Executive had given initial consideration to the budget which would receive final approval on 11 February;
- the city precept was likely to be approved at the level of £80.

93. Update on the Office Project:

The committee received a report from the Property Manager.

Resolved: that the progress made to date be noted.

94. Direction of Travel:

The Committee considered the report submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 28 January 2009, along with the Audit Commission's Joint Direction of Travel report on the Wiltshire district councils. The purpose was to inform the work of the unitary authority in dealing with current district council services and identify areas for further work.

Resolved: that the report be noted together with the following areas where further work was required:

- paragraph 26; temporary accommodation and length of stay on bed & breakfast
- paragraph 31; planning performance
- paragraph 39; economic development
- paragraph 41; levels of crime
- paragraph 46; recycling rates
- paragraph 52; ombudsman complaints
- paragraph 80; performance monitoring

95. Budget 2009/10 and Treasury Matters:

The Head of Financial Services advised that the Wiltshire Council budget for 2009/10 was with the Implementation Executive before final approval by Wiltshire County Council (WCC), the Housing Revenue Account and the level of rents for 2009/10 would be agreed by both WCC and Salisbury DC as responsibility for housing functions was shared and outlined the manner in which treasury management operated with a view to minimising risk.

96. Wiltshire Council Audit Committee:

The committee considered the proposals agreed by the Implementation Executive on 13 January 2009.

Resolved: that the committee's concerns about the lack of independent external membership as recommended by CIPFA and the notion that cabinet members should be regarded as members of the committee (albeit non-voting) be raised with Wiltshire Council.

97. Final meeting:

As this was the last meeting of the committee the Head of Financial Services on behalf of the council's officers thanked members for the constructive and supportive manner in which the committee's business had been conducted.

*The meeting concluded at 7.45 pm
Members of public in attendance 0*