

## MINUTES OF AUDIT & IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

25 June 2008

7.30pm-9.45pm

### PRESENT

### COUNCILLORS

David Carter ( Chairman)

Joel Charles  
Shona Johnson

Tony Durcan  
Nick Macy  
Mark Wilkinson

Mark Gough  
Clive Souter

### APOLOGIES

Lorna Spenceley

### ALSO PRESENT

Simon Carter

#### 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

#### 2. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2008 and 24 April 2008 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 3. MATTERS ARISING

None.

#### 4. WRITTEN QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

None.

#### 5. COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN

**RESOLVED** that

- (a) the Work Plan be noted;
- (b) a glossary be included in future reports to this Committee, of terms and abbreviations used in those reports.

6. **AUDIT & INSPECTION PLAN 2008/09**

The Committee received a report from Paul King, District Auditor, on the annual Audit & Inspection Plan, which summarised the audit and inspection work the Commission proposed to undertake for 2008/09.

Members suggested that this Committee's Terms of Reference should be amended, if it transpired that they were not robust enough to address the areas for improvement, which had been outlined in the Plan.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

7. **AUDIT COMMISSION REPORT ON THE JOINT VENTURE COMPANY**

The Committee received a report on the Audit Commission's review of the implementation of the Council's Joint Venture Company (JVCO) with Kier Harlow Ltd.

The review was undertaken at the end of the JVCO's first year of operation and covered its strategic and operational implementation, as well as its governance and management arrangements.

Appended to the report was an Improvement Action Plan to address the three recommendations arising from the review, aimed at continuing the successful development of the partnership.

**RESOLVED** that the Audit Commission's report and the Improvement Plan (at Appendix B of the report) be noted.

8. **QUARTERLY AND YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT  
QUARTER FOUR – 2007/08**

The Committee received a quarterly performance report for the period 1 January 2008 to 31 March 2008 (quarter four), together with the Improvement Action Plans for the performance indicators that were underperforming.

Members noted that action plans had not been included in cases where the indicators would not be carried forward to next year, nor for anti-social behaviour indicators which were attributable to the Police. It was envisaged that a Police representative would be invited to a future

meeting of this Committee to consider anti-social behaviour performance indicators.

**RESOLVED** that

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) the Improvement Action Plans, at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved;
- (c) future tables to include details of Quarter 4, in addition to 'Year End'.

9. **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATOR TARGETS 2008/09**

Further to Minute 86 (24/4/08), the Committee received a report which provided contextual and historical performance data in relation to the revised set of corporate performance indicators, which had replaced the national Best Value Performance Indicators.

Members noted that the specification for the BV202 performance indicator (number of people sleeping rough on a single night within the area of the local authority) was based on the national specification and requested that a local specification be established.

**RESOLVED** that

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) the proposed local performance targets, at Appendix 1 of the report, be agreed as the basis for performance reporting for 2008/09;
- (c) if possible, a revised specification be established for BV202.

**It being 9.30pm, the Committee resolved to continue until 10pm.**

10. **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2007/08**

The Committee received a report and accompanying Statement of Accounts, which had been submitted to this Committee for comment, prior to being submitted to Policy & Resources Committee.

It was noted that paragraph 5 of the covering report should be amended by deleting “comprises a gross underspend..... and income were as follows.” and substituting “as set out in the table below.”.

As Members were concerned that, due to the late circulation of the papers, they had not had sufficient time to read them, the Committee adjourned for 15 minutes.

Having reconvened the meeting, Members decided that they needed more time to digest the information, before making any comments to the Policy & Resources Committee.

**RESOLVED** that individual Members inform the Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee by 6pm 26 June 2008, if they have any comments on the accounting policies or concerns arising from the financial statements to be brought to the attention of the Policy & Resources Committee.

11. **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

The Committee received a report which provided background on the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year 2007/08 and a draft Annual Governance Statement.

The Council was required to prepare an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) instead of a Statement on Internal Control (SIC), with effect from 2007/08.

**RECOMMENDED TO POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE** that the Annual Governance Statement be adopted.

12. **GERSHON EFFICIENCY SAVINGS**

The Committee received a report on the Gershon General Fund efficiency savings for 2007-2008.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted.

13. **UPDATE ON INTERNAL AUDIT**

The Committee received a report, which was a standing item on this Committee’s agenda, giving an update on Internal Audit since the last report on 28 February 2008.

**RESOLVED** that the structural changes, the continuing progress being made and the actions being taken be noted.

14. **PLAYHOUSE BUDGET**

The Committee received a report, which was a standing item on this Committee's agenda, giving an update on the Playhouse budget since the last report on 28 February 2008.

The details in this report referred to the budget at the end of period 13 for 2007/08.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

15. **THE OPERATION OF BUS TRAVEL IN HARLOW**

The Committee received a report on the research undertaken into alternative options for the operation of bus travel in Harlow.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted and it be recommended that no action be taken to pursue the provision of a bus service by this Council.

16. **INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08**

The Committee received the annual report on Internal Audit, as required by the CIPFA Code of Practice.

**RESOLVED** that the 2007/08 Internal Audit Annual Report be noted.

17. **IMPROVEMENT GROUP MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Improvement Group held on 27 February 2008 be noted.

18. **BUSINESS RISK MANAGEMENT PROCESS**

This report had been amended to allow it to be taken in open session.

Following a review to update the significant business risks facing the Council, the Committee received a report which identified those risks.

A further report detailing action to mitigate the identified risks would be submitted to a future meeting.

**RESOLVED** that

- (a) the report on Business Risk Management and, in particular, the strategic risks which have been identified in the attached report, be noted;
- (b) the submission of a further report to the September meeting, which will detail the actions to mitigate the risks and which will be developed through a further workshop involving CMT and Heads of Service, be noted.

19. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

None.

20. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

- (a) Keren Mallinson

Keren Mallinson, Head of Customer Services was leaving the Council to take up a new post elsewhere. This being her last Audit & Improvement Committee meeting, Members took the opportunity to thank her for all the hard work she had undertaken in support of this Committee and said that she would be sorely missed

21. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Committee did not move into private session to discuss the Business Risk Management Progress report, as it had been amended to allow it to be considered in open session (Minute 18 above refers).

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE