

Corporate Governance Committee – 28 September 2009

Present: Councillor Williams (Chairman)
Councillors Critchard, Denington, Govier, Henley, O'Brien, Paul,
A Wedderkopp, Mrs Whitmarsh and Mrs Wilson

Officers: Mrs G Croucher (Democratic Services Officer), Ms M Hammond
(Strategic Finance Officer), Mr C Gunn (Group Auditor, South West
Audit Partnership), Mrs R James (Performance and Client Lead), Mr R
Sealy (Performance and Client Manager) and Mr D Woodbury (Health
and Safety Advisor)

Also Present: Mr T Bowditch and Mr B Bethall (Audit Commission)

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

30. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Govier, Henley and Paul declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council.

31. Annual Governance Report

Mr Brian Bethell and Mr Terry Bowditch of the Audit Commission (AC) introduced Taunton Deane Borough Council's Annual Governance Report 2008/2009.

Details of key areas of judgement and audit risk were reported, together with weaknesses identified in internal control.

A number of errors that had been identified in the financial statements were reported. The accounts had been adjusted and a revised financial statement would be presented to the Committee.

The draft Management Representation Letter was presented for the approval of Members.

Resolved that approval be given to sign the Management Representation Letter.

32. Corporate Improvement Plan Governance

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposals to strengthen the governance process to ensure ownership, monitoring and delivery of each action in the Corporate Action Plan.

Under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment regime, there were two organisational assessments, Use of Resources and Managing Performance, as well as the Area Assessment for Somerset. To assess these, the Audit Commission had carried out an inspection and had made recommendations.

There were a number of corporate actions that needed to be completed in order to meet set Government standards, including the Data Quality Action Plan and Risk Management Plan. All corporate actions would be fed into the Corporate Action Plan.

As a result of the Core Council Restructure, progress on the Corporate Action Plan had not been reported for 18 months, but this would be reported at the meeting in December 2009.

The Performance and Client Team took responsibility for putting together the Corporate Action Plan but the Corporate Management Team (CMT) would have ownership. Actions would be allocated an owner and each owner would be responsible for delivering actions and feeding back progress on a quarterly basis.

Progress would be reported on a quarterly basis to CMT. If actions were 'off track', CMT would be responsible for ensuring sufficient resources were allocated.

Members requested that the Action Plan should be reported on a quarterly basis.

Resolved that the report be noted.

33. Comprehensive Area Assessment Update

Reported that the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) had come into effect in April 2009 and would change how public sector organisations would be assessed.

The CAA would look at how well local services were working together to improve the quality of life for local people. It was a joint assessment of the performance of local public services and how they would meet local priorities.

Feedback on Taunton Deane's organisational assessment, including Use of Resources and Managing Performance would be sent to the Council on 19 October 2009 and would include a full narrative following the Audit Commissions Inspections and Taunton Deane's organisational score. If a review of the organisational assessment or overall score was required, an application would need to be submitted to the Audit Commission by 23 October 2009.

A further narrative was due on 4 December 2009, which would be made public on 10 December 2009.

The Area Assessment reviewed performance against three overarching questions:

- How well did local priorities express community needs and aspirations?

- How well were outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?
- What were the prospects for future improvement?

The Audit Commission would report on the CAA in January 2010 and any actions arising would be fed directly into the Corporate Action Plan.

Resolved that the report be noted.

34. Internal Audit Plan – Progress Review

Considered report previously circulated which provided an update on the significant findings and recommendations for the period July to September 2009.

Details were also reported of the operational audits and managed audits completed since June 2009 which included the main issues raised and the management responses thereto.

Details of the reviews currently in progress were also provided.

Resolved that the report be noted.

35. Annual Governance Statement Action Plan Update

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan.

The Annual Governance Statement Action Plan had been approved by the Corporate Governance Committee at the meeting on 18 May 2009. An action plan was produced to monitor actions highlighted.

There had been progress in many parts of the action plan and there were some tasks that were not due to start until later in 2009.

Resolved that the report be noted.

36. Changes to the Constitution

Considered report previously circulated, concerning changes to the Constitution that were required to update the Standards Committee terms of reference following the implementation of the Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Regulations 2009.

The Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Regulations 2009 came into force on 15 June 2009 and had amended the way in which dispensations were granted. It was felt by the Standards Committee that some minor changes were needed to the way in which these dispensations were granted in order to make the process as flexible as possible.

It was also felt that in respect of Standing Orders, more flexibility was required on the timing of Members to submit motions to Full Council and that clarity was required in relation to prejudicial interests.

Resolved that Full Council be recommended to approve the changes to the constitution.

37. Health and Safety Update

Mr David Woodbury, the Health and Safety Advisor, presented the Health and Safety Report updating Members on strategic issues including the DLO.

Resolved that the current position be noted.

(The meeting ended at 7.30pm)