

Corporate Governance Committee – 9 March 2015

Present: Councillor D Reed (Chairman)
Councillor Coles (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Beaven, Hall, Horsley, Hunt, R Lees, Miss Smith, P Smith,
Mrs Stock-Williams and A Wedderkopp.

Officers: Catrin Brown (Senior Environmental Health Officer – Health and Safety),
Bruce Lang (Assistant Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer), Richard
Sealy (Assistant Director - Corporate Services), Shirlene Adam (Director
of Operations and Section 151 Officer), Paul Harding (Corporate Strategy
and Performance Manager) and Andrew Randell (Corporate Support
Officer).

Also Present: Councillor Morrell
Alistair Woodland from South West Audit Partnership (SWAP)

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

62. Apologies/ Substitution

Apologies : Councillors Denington, Gaines, Horsley and Mrs Lees.

Substitution : Councillor R Lees for Mrs Lees.

63. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2014 were taken as read and were signed.

64. Declaration of Interests

Councillors Coles, Hunt and A Wedderkopp declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor A Wedderkopp also declared a personal interest as a Member of Wessex Water's Environmental Panel. Councillor Hunt also declared a personal interest as a Member of Somerset County Council's Pensions Committee.

65. Taunton Deane Borough Councils Constitution

The Assistant Chief Executive, Bruce Lang, provided an update on the progress being made with revising the Council's Constitution and the latest position as to the review of Member numbers on Taunton Deane Borough Council.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and statements and asked questions which included:-

- It was requested that an edited version of the Constitution be submitted to the Committee, with Councillors requesting more time to assess this.

- Full Council would have the final say as to what is included within the Constitution but Councillors would have the opportunity to input any concerns before it reached this point.
- After any amendments had been made, a full further report would come to the Committee after the forthcoming elections.
- The Boundary Commission review was due to begin in August 2015.
- The Committee would be provided with a 'road map' which set out the stages and timeline to enable Members to prepare for the review.
- It was important that the views of individual Councillors were captured to provide detailed information about their Wards.
- Contact would be made with the Boundary Commission to ascertain what could be done in advance.

Resolved that the verbal update provided be noted.

66. Update on Health and Safety Performance and Strategy for 2014-2015

Considered report previously circulated, which provided an update on the progress of a range of Health and Safety matters across the organisation.

Below was a summary of topics which included:-

- Accident and Incident data for the part of the financial year 2014-2015 was as follows:-

TDBC Accident Totals 1st April 2014 - 31st January 2015				
Classification	TDBC	DLO & Crematorium	Public	Tenants (public areas)
Reportable	0	3	0	0
Non-reportable	6	41	3	2
Near Miss	0	9	0	0
Period Total	6	53	3	2

- There had been two dog bites to employees working in Council domestic housing recorded.
- Key performance indicator (KPI) monitoring from 1 April 2014 had shown two of the four indicators were green and on target as well as one red and one amber.
- Copies of the reviewed and updated Joint Health and Safety Policies had been circulated for consultation. The policies continued to be reviewed to a dated schedule.
- Hearing tests had been carried out for 40 employees (DLO and the Print Room) and a further 27 were planned.
- Medical assessments for the task trained DLO employees who were involved in removing asbestos and those working in confined spaces were planned for completion before the end of March 2015.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and statements and asked questions which included:- (Responses were shown in italics)

- It was questioned if incidents were followed up. *If they were serious incidents such as dog bites then they were reported to the Police.*
- The KPI's were targeted to reduce accidents.
- The reduction of Health and Safety audits by 60% were believed to be due to greater raising of awareness by the Health and Safety Service leading to increased requests for assistance.
- Hearing tests would be an annual process for employees exposed to noisy equipment in the workplace.
- Members requested that incidents should be colour coded. *Any Health and Safety audits involved an inspection of the workplace and documentation along with risk assessments.*
- An issue relation to a pond at Cotford St Luke would be picked up separately with the Councillor raising the issue.

Resolved that the report be noted.

67. Grant Thornton - Certification Report 2013/2014

Considered report previously circulated, on the Council's Annual Audit Letter which summarised the key findings arising from the work that had been carried out for the year ended 31 March 2014. The key messages were:-

- Both claims/returns were submitted and certified by the required deadlines;
- The pooling of Housing Capital Receipts Return was certified without amendment or qualification however the Housing Benefit Claim was qualified and amended; and
- Working papers were in place to support the entries on the claim/returns and requests for additional information had been dealt with promptly.

The Audit fees for 2013/2014 certification had been based on the final 2011/2012 certification fees. The fees for certification of Housing Benefit subsidy had been reduced by 12% to reflect the removal of Council Tax Benefit from the scheme.

Resolved that the Auditor's report be noted.

68. Risk Management Update Report

Considered report previously circulated, about the corporate risks which were being managed by the Joint Management Team (JMT) as well as an action plan for improving risk management within the Council.

Both Taunton Deane and WSC recognised the importance of effective identification, evaluation and management of all key strategic and operational risks.

Risk management was a key element of the Council's overarching Governance arrangements and it covered the whole spectrum of risks and not just those

associated with finance, health and safety, business continuity and insurance. It also included risks associated with:-

- Service provision,
- Effectiveness and continuity;
- Public image (reputation);
- Compliance with legislation; and
- Environment.

The Corporate Risk Register was a 'live' document which highlighted the key corporate risks facing the Council and was formally reviewed by JMT on a quarterly basis.

There were currently 16 (13 joint risks and three Taunton Deane specific risks) risks which had been identified for inclusion on the Corporate Risk Register. This was a reduction of two from one from the last time an update was provided to Members.

Since the last update, the four risks relating to the growth programme had been amalgamated into a single risk as there was a degree of duplication with the four previous entries and their mitigation.

Reported that a new risk had been added to the register regarding staff retention, engagement and development.

Mitigating actions have continued to be delivered in respect of the various risks. These are set out in the risk register and will continue in order to manage down the risks to an acceptable level.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and statements and asked questions which included:- (Responses were shown in italics)

- The changes since the last report were detailed along with the direction of travel.
- Universal Credit was thought to be a risk, with the danger of reduction from rental income. To diminish any risks work was being done in conjunction with the Department of Work and Pensions and landlords.
- It was considered what action was being done to mitigate risks to retain and attract staff.
- Member briefings on Universal Credit were requested. *It was clarified that Universal Credit was not a migration process and would only be for new claimants.*
- Concern was expressed relating to service continuity and dealing with issues and growing expectations with less staff capacity.
- Risks were shared by both Taunton Deane and WSC in relation to some cases.
- Members commended the clarity of the report.

Resolved that the report be noted.

69. Internal Audit Plan 2014-2015 Progress

Considered report previously circulated, which summarised the Council's Internal Audit Service progress with the 2014-2015 Internal Audit Plan and included:-

- Details of any new significant weaknesses identified during internal audit work completed since the last report to the Committee in December 2014; and
- A schedule of audits completed during the period, detailing their respective assurance opinion rating, the number of recommendations and the respective priority ranking of these.

Reported that there were some high priority recommendations identified since the September update. The recommendations had been assessed at service level.

The Internal Audit Service were making steady progress against the 2014-2015 plan. It was recognised that significant changes had occurred over the last few months at the Council with regard to officer responsibilities. Whilst this had caused movement in the Audit Services timings of some of the audits, SWAP still anticipated full delivery of the plan.

Progress had been made with SW1 on the ICT audits and the audit engagement protocol with SW1 was out for final approval and should be a live document for the end of the year.

It was also reported that although SWAP had returned to partial assurance audits, no significant corporate risks had been identified.

Resolved that the SWAP Progress Report be noted.

70. Internal Audit Plan 2015-2016

Considered report previously circulated, which provided details of the Internal Audit Plan 2015-2016.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and statements and asked questions which included:-

- The Section 151 Officer was confident in the report which made connections with the Risk Register. Further comment was made that this was a good start for the year ahead.
- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was not something that was specifically being looked at. All costs were being charged back to the HRA.
- The Internal Audit Charter was attached for approval.

Resolved that the report be noted.

71. External Audit (Grant Thornton) Update Report

Considered report previously circulated, which provided a progress update from the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, in respect of the 2013/2014 audit work for Taunton Deane and on emerging national issues, which might be relevant to the Council.

Each year Grant Thornton were required to carry out "set" audit work and the report provided a useful progress update in relation to that work.

The report updated Members on the status and progress on the auditor's programme of work as at November 2014.

In July, there had been the release of Code Changes by Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) / Local Authority Scotland Accounts Advisory Committee (LASAAC) regarding the 2015/2016 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting. This had been the subject of public consultation.

During the discussion of this item, Members were informed that the internal control regime was working effectively. The purpose was to give assurance to Members what they were doing was acceptable, affordable and budgeted amongst audit fees.

Resolved that the report be noted.

72. Corporate Governance Committee Forward Plan

Submitted for information the proposed Forward Plan of the Corporate Governance Committee.

Resolved that the Corporate Governance Committee Forward Plan be noted.

(The meeting ended at 8.00 p.m).