

## **Corporate Governance Committee – 12 March 2012**

Present: Councillor Denington (Chairman)  
Councillor A Wedderkopp (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Beaven, Coles, Hall, Hunt, Miss James, R Lees, D Reed,  
Mrs Reed and Tooze.

Officers: Shirlene Adam (Strategic Director), Debbie Arscott (Leisure Services Manager), Tonya Meers (Legal and Democratic Services Manager), David Woodbury (Health and Safety Advisor), Alastair Woodland (Audit Manager), Dan Webb (Client and Performance Lead), Chris Gunn (Internal Audit Manager) and Natasha Williams (Corporate Support Officer).

Also Present: Peter Lappin (Audit Commission).

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### **72. Apologies/Substitution**

Apologies: Councillors Gaines and Mrs Stock-Williams.

Substitution: Councillor Mrs Reed for Mrs Stock-Williams.

### **73. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2011 were taken as read and were signed.

### **74. Health and Safety Update Report**

Considered report previously circulated concerning progress in implementing the Health and Safety Action Plan. The Corporate Health and Safety Advisor explained that overall progress was good, with no new significant risks or incidents to report.

Members requested more information on the one 'near miss' at the DLO. The Health and Safety Advisor would circulate a more detailed written response to Members.

**Resolved** to note that there were no significant risks or incidents.

### **75. Audit Commission – Audit of Grant Claims**

Mr Peter Lappin of the Audit Commission introduced the Certification of Claims and Returns report for 2010/2011.

The report summarised the Audit Commissions findings from their review work and highlighted several areas where improvements could be made and the action plan reflected this. The action plan would be monitored to ensure the issues were progressed.

Members were advised that the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Scheme had required a reduced level of additional testing in 2010/11 compared with 2009/10 as a result of fewer errors being identified. In turn, a reduced fee had been charged.

The fee for the audit of grant claims in 2010/11 was £31,869.

**Resolved** to note the Certification of Claims and Returns report from the Audit Commission.

## **76. Audit Commission – External Audit Plan 2011/2012**

Mr Peter Lappin of the Audit Commission introduced Taunton Deane Borough Council's Annual Audit Plan.

The report set out an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council and outlined the following:-

- The Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement;
- Value for Money;
- The fees charged by the Audit Commission compared to those budgeted; and
- Current and future challenges.

**Resolved** that the Audit Plan 2011/12 from the Audit Commission be noted.

## **77. Risk Management Update**

Considered report previously circulated, updating Members on the current position of Risk Management.

The annual review of the Corporate Risk Register had been drafted by the Corporate Management Team for 2012. Members of the Corporate Governance Committee were invited to contribute to the process of refreshing the Corporate Risk Register by identifying strategic risks.

Also reported that Operational Risk Registers had been produced for each of the Council's Themes as part of the 2011/12 service planning process.

**Resolved** that the progress with Corporate Risk Management be noted.

## **78. Section 106 Update**

Considered report previously circulated, which provided details of the progress made against the recording of the centralisation of the Section 106 Agreement Developer Contributions.

A 2011 report from Audit, commissioned by Shirlene Adam, advised that the Section 106 Agreements for this Authority should be centrally monitored from the creation of an agreement through to implementation, collection of contributions and spending of funds.

Members were advised that the Community Leisure Officer had developed a master spreadsheet. The Council was therefore now complying with the recommendations made in the Audit report. The start date for centralisation was August 2011.

Members were advised that once a year, it would be possible for a statement to be sent out to Ward Members outlining details of Section 106 Agreements in their Ward area.

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

## **79. New Standards Regime**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning The Localism Act 2011 which had made fundamental changes to the system of regulation of standards of conduct for elected and co-opted Councillors.

The date for implementation of these changes was the 1 July 2012.

Taunton Deane would remain under a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct for its elected and co-opted Members.

The Act repealed Section 55 of the Local Government Act 2000, which provided for the current statutory Standards Committee.

Although there would be no requirement for a Council to have a Standards Committee, there would still be a need to deal with standards issues and case-work. In such circumstances, it was felt that it would be convenient to retain a Committee but without the unique features which were conferred by the previous legislation.

Reported that the current ten General Principles and Model Code of Conduct would be repealed by the Act and Members would no longer have to give an undertaking to comply with the Code of Conduct.

However, the Council would be required to adopt a new Code of Conduct governing elected and co-opted Member's conduct when acting in that capacity.

The Localism Act had abolished the concepts of personal and prejudicial interests. Instead, regulations would define "Disclosable Pecuniary Interests" (DPIs).

At present it was not known what DPIs would comprise, but they were likely to be broadly equivalent to the current prejudicial interests but with a number of important differences, details of which were submitted.

**Resolved** that the recommendations contained in the report be supported.

#### **80. South West Audit Partnership Internal Audit Plan 2011/2012**

Councillor Miss James declared a personal interest as an employee of Viridor.

The 2011/12 Annual Audit Plan summarised the work of the Council's Internal Audit Service and provided:

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

Members noted that some high priority recommendations had been identified since December 2011 and that these were to be followed up by Internal Audit to provide assurance that risk exposure had been reduced.

**Resolved** that the progress made in the delivery of the 2011/12 Internal Audit Plan be noted.

#### **81. South West Audit Partnership Internal Audit Plan 2012/13**

Submitted for consideration the Internal Audit Plan 2012/13.

The Plan had been developed with the co-operation and approval of the Section 151 Officer. It was risk based and, where possible, was co-ordinated with the audit plans of the other members of the South West Audit partnership.

**Resolved** that the Internal Audit Plan be agreed.

**82. South West Audit Partnership Internal Audit Charter**

Considered report previously circulated, setting out the terms of reference of the Internal Audit Charter which governed the work of the South West Audit Partnership at Taunton Deane Borough Council.

Details of the Internal Audit Charter were submitted for consideration and review by Members.

**Resolved** that the Internal Audit Charter be approved.

**83. 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 8:05 pm).