

Corporate Governance Committee – 4 February 2013

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

Officers: Tonya Meers (Legal and Democratic Services Manager), Scott Weetch
(Environment Health Lead) and Natasha Williams (Corporate Support
Officer).

Also Present: Gerry Cox (Head of SWAP).

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

1. Apologies/Substitutions

Apologies: Councillors Gaines, Govier, Hunt and Mrs Stock-Williams.

Substitutions: Councillor Meikle for Councillor Hunt;
Councillor Morrell for Councillor Mrs Stock-Williams.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2012 were taken as read
and were signed.

3. Declaration of Interests

The Chairman (Councillor Reed) declared a personal interest as Chairman of
the Somerset Region of the Wooden Spoon Charity.

4. South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) Governance Arrangements

Considered covering report previously circulated, which requested the
Corporate Governance Committee to approve the proposed changes to the
governance of the South West Audit Partnership and consider the impact on
Taunton Deane Borough Council.

Members discussed the proposals, age profile, governance arrangements and
exit fees of the proposed company which would be limited by guarantee.

The Head of SWAP, Gerry Cox, advised Members of the following:-

- No disruption to the service would be received;
- The transition and future work of the company would be transparent;
- The Corporate Governance Committee would continue to receive
regular updates;

- Alternative voting arrangements could be implemented. If members voted in favour, provision would be made to vote on key principals by proxy, email voting or tele-voting as well as in person; and
- Exit fees would be the same as any charges that would currently be incurred.

Resolved that Full Council be recommended to:-

- a) Support the formation of a company limited by guarantee, to replace the existing South West Audit Partnership Joint Committee;
- b) Agree that Taunton Deane Borough Council should elect to be a Member of the company the South West Audit Partnership Limited from 1 April 2013 on the terms and basis set out in the Articles of Association, Deed and Service Agreement;
- c) Agree to the dissolving of the South West Audit Partnership Joint Committee at a date to be determined, but not later than 30 June 2013;
- d) Note the separation of responsibilities and membership profiles of the Members Board and Board of Directors and agree to nominate an Elected Member to sit on the Members Board and nominate the Deputy Section 151 Officer to be the Director on the Company Board;
- e) Request the Legal and Democratic Services Manager to progress the necessary legal work to facilitate the above and put in place the appropriate controls, authorities and indemnities to support officers and Members in the governance roles; and
- f) Agree to offer a guarantee to Somerset Pension Fund to the level of deficit relating to our ex-employees (estimated at £148,901).

5. Objection to License Fees to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Trade

Considered report previously circulated, which updated Members on the action taken to date in response to an objection received regarding license fees to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Trade.

A local elector had submitted an objection to Messrs Grant Thornton on 26 September 2012. Grant Thornton was Taunton Deane Borough Council's external auditor.

This Notice of Objection related to the Licence Fees to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Trade levied for 2011-12 because in the elector's view "the Council had levied licence fees in excess of its own calculation of 'reasonable costs', and the Council's 'reasonable costs' were excessive".

The Auditor had requested a submission in response to the Notice of Objection and clarification on a number of matters raised by the elector.

The Environment Health Lead, Scott Weetch, advised Members that a robust response had been submitted in line with the Auditor's deadline on the 29 January 2013.

There was no timescale in which a reply from the Auditor would be received. Taunton Deane Borough Council and the objector had a right to respond, once the reply from the Auditor was received.

Members were advised that a Taxi Forum existed where members of the public and/or taxi drivers could discuss any issues with an officer. The Licensing Team would also meet taxi drivers informally, if requested.

Resolved that the report be noted.

(The meeting ended at 7.07pm).