

Corporate Governance Committee – 11 March 2013

Present: Councillor D Reed (Chairman)
Councillor A Wedderkopp (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Beaven, Coles, Denington, Govier, Hall, Horsley, Hunt,
Mrs Stock-Williams, Tooze, Mrs Warmington and Williams.

Officers: Shirlene Adam (Strategic Director), Mark Leeman (Strategy Lead),
Tonya Meers (Legal and Democratic Services Manager), Richard Sealy
(Corporate and Client Services Manager), Dan Webb (Client and
Performance Lead) Natasha Williams (Corporate Support Officer) and
Alastair Woodland (Audit Manager).

Also Present: Peter Lappin (Grant Thornton).

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

6. Apologies/Substitution

Apologies: Councillors Gaines, Miss James and R Lees.

Substitution: Councillor Horsley for Councillor Miss James.

7. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2013 were taken as read and were signed.

8. Grant Claims Report 2011/2012

Considered covering report previously circulated, which presented the External Auditors findings from their 2011/2012 review work.

Grant Thornton and the Audit Commission had certified four claims and returns for the financial year, relating to expenditure of £82 million.

The Certification of Claims and Returns report highlighted several areas where improvements could be made and the action plan reflected this.

It was reported that the number of claims that required certification had reduced. The Housing Revenue Account self-financing had meant that the base data return for the housing stock was no longer required and the Department for Communities and Local Government no longer required the audit certification of disabled facilities grants. Also, the Council had fewer claims amended in 2011/2012 than in 2012/2011.

The validation check report was discussed and it was recommended that future validation programme “bug” checks would be run before the claim was prepared.

Members discussed the difference in fees between 2010/2011 and 2011/2012. It was explained that the fee varied from year to year depending on the complexity of the cases sampled. Additional time had been spent on the qualification letter. With the validation “bug” report not being run before the preparation of the claim meant that the results had to be followed up.

Peter Lappin (Grant Thornton) thanked the officers of Taunton Deane Borough Council for their work.

Resolved that the Certification of Claims and Returns report be noted.

9. Update on Health and Safety

Richard Sealy (Corporate and Client Services Manager) updated Members on the progress of a range of Health and Safety matters across the organisation, which included:-

- The situation with regard to the vacant Health and Safety Advisor position;
- The arrangements for the Health and Safety Committee;
- The progress being made on re-establishing Joint Health and Safety Inspections;
- Discussions with UNISON on the introduction of the ‘Fair and Just Culture’;
- The current position with regard to the consolidation and compliance audit;
- The South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) Audit on Health and Safety;
- Accident and Incident Data for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 January 2013; and
- General Health and Safety Issues.

Health and Safety refresher training for Leads/Managers was scheduled for March and April 2013.

Members discussed the importance of Health and Safety and the findings of the audit review. Partial assurance was given in relation to the areas reviewed.

It was intended for relevant service managers to provide an update at future Corporate Governance Committee meetings if a partial assurance had been achieved.

Mr Sealy advised that there were no significant risks or incidents to report.

Members thanked Mr Sealy for providing cover over the past few months and the good progress achieved since the retirement of the Health and Safety Advisor.

Resolved that the progress made on the delivery of the strategy and the initiatives to improve the Council’s operating culture be noted.

10. TDBC Response to the Equality Act

As part of the 2012/2013 Audit Plan, a review had been undertaken to assess the adequacy of the controls and procedures in place for Equality and Diversity - Equalities Analysis Integration across the Authority. Although good progress had been made against three Corporate Equality Objectives, the SWAP had identified significant inconsistencies and high inherent risks against the four key issues identified.

In response to the findings, a Corporate Equality Action Plan (CEAP) had been prepared which would be implemented during 2013/2014. CMT would further consider the CEAP on 4 March 2013.

Progress against the CEAP would be monitored and reported upon twice a year with findings circulated to Members.

Members of the Corporate Governance Committee discussed the need for an interim update every quarter as well as the availability of equalities training for Members.

Resolved that the:-

- Performance against requirements and targets be noted; and
- The proposed response in the form of the Corporate Equalities Action Plan (Appendix 3) be considered.

10. Risk Management

Considered report previously circulated, updating Members on the current position of Risk Management. This was the process by which risks were identified, evaluated and controlled and was one of the key elements of the Corporate Governance Framework.

The Corporate Management Team (CMT) had recently undertaken a review of the Corporate Risk Register. A Summary Risk Profile and list of 17 risks was included in the report.

A Risk Management Action Plan was also included in the report which outlined the key areas of focus to further improve and embed Risk Management during 2013.

Mr Webb (Client and Performance Lead) updated Members of the perceived risks. It was advised that the new West Somerset Joint Partnership project would be included in future risk profiles. Members discussed the importance that this project be included.

Members discussed the following risks:-

- Growth;
- Regeneration of Taunton Town Centre & retail scheme;
- Health and Safety; and
- Gypsies and Travellers.

Resolved that the:-

- Progress with the Corporate Risk Management be noted;
- The Corporate Risk Register review be discussed;
- The Risk management Action Plan be approved; and
- The new Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Joint Partnership project be included on the Corporate Risk Register.

10. Internal Audit Plan Progress 2012-2013

Considered report previously circulated which summarised the work of the Councils 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 September; 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.

Members noted that where a partial assurance had been awarded, Internal Audit would follow up on the agreed management responses to provide assurance that risk exposure had been reduced.

Members were advised that the review of the Acolaid System was now at report stage. Also one further change had been made to the Internal Audit Plan with the System Development Life Cycle deferred to quarter 1 of the 2013/2014 plan.

The reported showed that there were a total of 39 reviews covering the 2013/2014 plan. 31 were at a report status and 8 were in progress.

All audit field work should be materially completed by the end of March 2013 to ensure 100% delivery of the Internal Audit Plan.

Resolved that the:-

- Progress made in the delivery of the 2012/2013 Internal Audit Plan be noted.

11. Internal Audit Plan 2013/2014

Submitted for consideration the Internal Audit Plan 2013/2014.

The Internal Audit Plan was a flexible plan that could be amended during the year to deal with shifts in priorities.

Members were advised that if the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) continued to move forward to become a Company Limited by Guarantee, it would result in

changes to roles and responsibilities within the Partnership. In addition, the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) would become mandatory, effective from 1 April 2013. These changes would have an impact on the Internal Audit Charter which was last reviewed by the Corporate Governance Committee on 12 March 2012. Therefore it was proposed that the review of the Charter be deferred until April 2013.

Resolved that the:-

- Internal Audit Plan for 2013/2014 be approved; and
- The Internal Audit Charter review be deferred until after April 2013.

12. Forward Plan

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

Members discussed the need for quarterly updates with regard all reviews that received a partial assurance. Shirlene Adam advised that the reviews would be incorporated into future Forward Plans.

Resolved that the Corporate Governance Committee Forward plan be noted.

(The meeting ended at 7.52pm).