

**Minutes of the Audit Committee
26 June 2014**

Present:

Councillor M.J. Madams (Chairman)
Councillor A.C. Harman (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

D. Gohil

A.C. Patterson

C.V. Strong

Apologies: Apologies received from Councillor D. Patel.

157/14 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2014 were approved as a correct record.

158/14 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

159/14 Corporate Risk Management – Performance Management Arrangements

The Committee received an update from the Assistant Chief Executive, Lee O'Neil on the Council's Performance Management arrangements. He described four processes relating to performance management at the Council comprising the Corporate Planning Process, Service Planning Process, Appraisal Process and Performance Reporting Process. He stated that under the new arrangements a working group had been formed to monitor and review the Corporate Plan and recommend to Cabinet ways to improve Council services. The Committee requested an update following the first Performance Management Working Group meeting at the next Audit Committee on 18 September 2014. Councillors recommended that issues arising from the previous residents survey should be acknowledged prior to launching the next survey, to feed into the Corporate Planning process.

Resolved that the Assistant Chief Executive, Lee O'Neil attend the next Audit Committee on 18 September 2014 to give an update following the first Performance Management Working Group meeting.

160/14 Corporate Risk Management

The Head of Audit Services reported that the Corporate Risk Register had undergone its regular quarterly review and update by the Corporate Risk Management Group and Management Team to ensure that actions were being taken to deal with the identified risks. The revised register was considered to be an accurate reflection of the high level risks affecting the Authority. Progress on actions was documented on the register.

The Head of Audit Services drew members' attention to the closure of Bed and Breakfast providers in the borough and the substantial pressures this

posed for the Council's housing departments. She explained that due to the major changes to Housing Benefit legislation, the demands on the Housing team had exacerbated considerably. The Committee noted that an external Housing Advisor had been contracted to look at all options for investing in affordable housing as well as good practice elsewhere to alleviate associated risks.

The Committee was concerned about the effect of increased workload on Housing / Housing Benefit staff morale.

The Committee also discussed the potential impact of flooding on the Council's Staines-upon-Thames regeneration project. The Committee were reminded that Nick Moon, the Risk and Resilience Manager, will attend the next Audit Committee on 18 September 2014 to provide an update on Emergency Planning and the Community Flood Meeting held on 5 June 2014.

The Head of Audit Services highlighted the continued risks associated with the lack of Council grounds maintenance and horticultural expertise and the task to address this issue. She explained that although this risk was being addressed, more needed to be accomplished to eliminate this ongoing concern. The Committee therefore discussed ways of addressing the outstanding risk, and for consideration to be given to using volunteers, Internships and Apprentices.

The Head of Audit also raised issue of the potential reputational damage and fines associated with poor information governance. She notified the Committee that the Head of Corporate Governance will attend the next Audit Committee on 18 September 2014 to provide an update on this matter.

The committee requested more information to be included in the next version of the Corporate Risk Register, specifically more description on the progress of actions which have been categorised as ongoing. The committee also requested that the status recorded under the 'action' column correspond to the RAG rating key.

Resolved that:

- (1)** The contents of the Corporate Risk Register be noted and accepted;
- (2)** The Head of Corporate Governance to attend the next Audit Committee to outline the steps taken to mitigate the risks associated with information governance.
- (3)** The Risk and Resilience Manager, to attend the next Audit Committee to answer queries relating to Emergency Planning.
- (4)** The next version of the Corporate Risk Register to ensure that the RAG status description is accurately reflected in the detailed register. and that where actions have been described as 'ongoing', there is scope to provide more detail under the 'Progress' column.

161/14 Internal Audit Annual Report

The Head of Audit Services outlined the Internal Audit Annual Report 2013/2014 which demonstrated how the authority fulfilled its statutory requirements to 'maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and of its system of internal control in accordance with proper internal audit practices.'

Resolved to note the Internal Audit Annual Report.

162/14 Committee Work Programme 2014-2015

The Committee considered its Work Programme for the 2014-2015 Municipal year.

Resolved to note the Committee Work Programme 2014-2015 subject to the inclusion that:

- (1) The Assistant Chief Executive, Lee O'Neil to provide an update on the work of the Performance Reporting Management Working Group at the next committee on 18 September 2014.
- (2) The Head of Corporate Governance to attend the next Audit Committee on 18 September 2014 to outline the steps taken to mitigate the risks associated with information governance.
- (3) The Risk and Resilience Manager, Nick Moon to attend the Audit Committee to be held on 18 September 2014 to answer queries relating to Emergency Planning.

The Committee warmly welcomed Punita Talwar, the Audit Manager, back to the Audit Committee after a period of absence.