

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 9 JULY 2012

Councillors Present: Jeff Beck (Chairman), Paul Bryant, David Holtby, Tony Linden, Alan Macro (Substitute) (In place of Julian Swift-Hook), Tony Vickers and Quentin Webb

Also Present: Andy Day (Head of Strategic Support) and Ian Priestley (Chief Internal Auditor),

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Julian Swift-Hook

PART I

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 20 February and 10 May 2012 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the word "onlu" in minute 26 (second sentence) being amended to read "only".

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

5. Internal Audit - Annual Report 2011-12 (GA2499)

The Committee considered a report, agenda item 4 concerning an opinion from the 'Head of Internal Audit' on the Council's internal control framework which provided support to the Annual Governance Statement.

Ian Priestley in introducing the item reported that of the issues identified via reviews in the year, only one area (Grounds Maintenance) had been reported as weak. The follow up action had now seen this area declared as "satisfactory".

RESOLVED that: the report be noted.

6. Internal Audit Plan 2012-15 (GA2477)

(Note: Councillor Tony Vickers arrived at the meeting at 6.25pm)

The Committee considered a report, agenda item 5 concerning a proposed programme of Internal Audit work for 2012-2015.

Ian Priestley in introducing the item reported that the Plan focussed on perceived key areas of risk across the Council. Furthermore this work would also help to shape the work of the external auditor which, in turn, reduced the Council's overall external audit costs.

The Committee noted the proposed programme of reviews which would cover the period 2012-2013. Councillor Tony Vickers questioned whether the asset management issues associated with Parkway had been discussed. It was agreed that this matter should be progressed via the Resource Management Working Group which had been discussing the issue.

RESOLVED that: the work programme for 2012-2015 be approved.

7. Annual Review of Internal Audit (GA2476)

The Committee considered a report, agenda item 6 concerning the annual review of the Council's Internal Audit service.

Ian Priestley in introducing the item reported that he was required under the Accounts and Audit Regulations to provide an annual review of the Audit Service of the Council. This review took the form of a self assessment of the Internal Audit Service by the Chief Internal Auditor, which was then reviewed by the Finance and Governance Group.

Ian Priestley reported that the only issue was one of resilience given that the resources available to him were at the bare minimum. Ian Priestley reported that he was exploring ways of providing more resilience which could involve working with neighbouring authorities. This approach would not only help to provide some resilience, but also development opportunities for staff.

RESOLVED that: the review be noted.

8. Recording of Questions and Answers at Council and Executive Meetings

The Committee considered a report, agenda item 7 concerning putting mechanisms in place to ensure that questions and answers at Council and Executive were recorded accurately.

Tony Vickers reported that he was concerned at the recent problems associated with the recording of Executive questions and answers and questioned whether a more reliable device should be procured.

Andy Day reported that the system used was reliable with only two issues arising in 18 months. The recent incident was caused by someone adjusting the controls within the cabinet located with the Council Chamber. Someone had effectively turned the volume controls down to zero, which had meant the recording device had not picked up any of the questions or answers. This problem had only recently been identified by engineers who had been asked to resolve the problem.

Andy Day reported that a new recording device had been procured and he would ensure that a notice was displayed on the cabinet, reminding staff not to adjust the settings. In relation to the recordings, Andy Day confirmed that each recording was kept until immediately following the next meeting of the Executive when this was wiped clean.

RESOLVED that: the current situation in relation to the recording of questions and answers at meetings of the Executive and Council Executive be noted.

9. Amendment to Start Time of Budget Setting Council Meeting

The Committee considered a report, agenda item 8 which proposed an earlier start time for the annual budget setting Council meeting in March.

Tony Vickers reported that the annual Council budget meeting held in March was one of the most important meetings of the year yet very often the meeting had to rush items through in order to finish before 10.00pm. As a consequence of this, he suggested that Council be asked to start this meeting at 6.30pm rather than 7.00pm.

RESOLVED that: Council be requested to agree to the March meeting (budget meeting) starting at 6.30pm in the future.

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - 9 JULY 2012 - MINUTES

10. To Consider Returning to the Committee System

The Committee considered a report, agenda item 9 concerning a request to carry out a review in relation to returning to a Committee System of Governance.

Tony Vickers reported that the Localism Act 2011 now made it possible for Local Authorities operating an Executive and Scrutiny form of governance, to return to a committee system of governance prior to the next elections. The Bill was originally drafted so that any changes in governance structures could not be implemented until the next ordinary elections which in West Berkshire's case was 2015.

RESOLVED that: Council be requested to determine whether they wished to have a review undertaken of the current governance arrangements, with a view to returning to a committee system of governance.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and closed at 7.15pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature