



AUDIT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 9TH MARCH 2016 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Rees - Chair
Mr N. Yates - Vice Chair

Councillors:

Mrs. E. Aldworth, Ms. L. Ackerman, Mrs K. Baker, D. Carter, N. Dix, Ms J. Gale, C. Hawker,
Ms. J. Jones, Mrs J.A. Pritchard and J. Simmonds.

Together with:

L. Hallez (Grant Thornton) and B. Morris (Grant Thornton).

N. Scammell (Acting Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer), G. Williams (Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), R. Harris (Internal Audit Manager), R. artshorn (Head of Public Protection), I.J. Martin (Emergency Planning Officer) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies of absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 9TH SEPTEMBER 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 9th September 2015 (minute nos. 1 - 12) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

4. BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT

The report provided the Committee with an update on business continuity management arrangements within the Council.

Members noted that a three stage process has been implemented incorporating Business Impact Analysis of service, followed by a Risk Assessment and Action Plan where appropriate. A Corporate Business Continuity Management Plan has been developed to address the corporate priorities and arrangements in relation to accommodation and ICT in the event of a business disruption.

Members thanked the Officers for the report and sought further information on the arrangements in place to accommodate essential services if necessary. Officers highlighted each department and service was considered and following analysis, the IT Suite within Enterprise was identified as a suitable location for key staff based in Penallta House.

Members discussed the recent issues with IT systems and the impact on the public. It was noted that every effort was made to restore key systems immediately. Further discussion ensued and Members noted that a review corporate services and back office arrangements had been conducted and it was identified that Caerphilly CBC have an IT Service that exceeds the cost and staff numbers of the Welsh Average. An outline business case is being considered for a Shared Resource Service arrangement like others in Gwent (Including Gwent Police) which would provide more resilience, stability and economies of scale and savings.

A Member queried whether Community Centres and Leisure Centres had been considered for emergency accommodation. It was noted that, following analysis, there was adequate resources available within the corporate buildings. In addition, significant works would need to be conducted within community buildings in terms of IT, telephony, and workstations, for example, in order to properly equip them to accommodate staff.

A Member raised concerns that there was little reference to political consultation during the process and felt this was particularly pertinent if there were a risk to reputation. Officers agreed to update the Business Continuity Management Plan in order to strengthen communications.

Following detailed discussion, the Audit Committee noted the report.

5. UPDATE ON THE NUMBERS OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED UNDER THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE COMPLAINTS POLICY

The report provided Members with an overview of the corporate complaints (for the period 1st August 2015 to 31st January 2016), which is one of the ways in which the Council gains information on the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the services provided corporately by the Council. The result of the monitoring enables each department to focus on areas of concern, to improve services and to monitor performance and ensure that any trends in issues raised are identified and dealt with so as to be avoided in the future. In addition, Members were asked to note the use of the Policy and Procedure to deal effectively with unacceptable, persistent or unreasonable actions by complainants.

Members thanked the Officer for the report and it was noted that no comparison data had been provided. Officers highlighted that comparative data would be provided in the annual report, however the comments made by members in this respect were noted and would be considered for the next 6-monthly update report.

Discussions ensued around the Corporate Complaints figures and Members sought clarification on the process for recording Service Requests. Following discussion, in which examples of service requests were highlighted to officers and clarification sought as to the circumstances in which service requests are escalated to formal complaints. It was agreed that Members forward examples of matters raised by their constituents to Officers to review the process and findings of the review presented on the next available Audit Committee agenda.

Members discussed the Members Portal and the facility to report complaints and make requests for Services, however it was noted that the facility is not available for all departments. The Officer explained that officers are working with the Democratic Services Committee and IT on potential further development of the Portal. Officers confirmed that they would report back to members on the specific point raised.

The Audit Committee noted the report.

6. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN

The report sought the approval of the Internal Audit Services Annual Audit Plan 2016/17 and outlined the internal audit coverage for 2016/17.

Members were asked to note that the approach was broadly similar to previous years but reflected the ongoing development of the plan in terms of coverage and risk identification. In addition, Members noted that the resources on which the plan is based have remained as the previous year as no savings were required to be made in 2016/17.

Members thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

A Member, having consideration for the plan and Appendix, queried the procedure for the receipt of Anonymous letters to schools. Officers explained that, if letters are received by the team as part of the internal post system and refer to corporate services, they are sent to the relevant department, schools will also have their own system for dealing with letters.

A Member raised concerns around the WHQs contract which is held with Robert Price, it was queried whether effective procurement has been conducted to ensure Value for Money, as goods can be purchased over the counter at a cheaper rate. Officers highlighted that the contract held with Robert Price is complex, there are a number of conditions which have to be met by the Contractor, for example, to take on a specified number of local apprentices and deliver goods to site etc., which have been included within the cost of the contract. Members were assured that rigorous checks are conducted to ensure that Value for Money is being obtained. In addition, Members noted that Robert Price are often subject to regular scrutiny undertaken by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group.

A Member queried whether requests can be made for Audits to be conducted on establishments within the borough, in particular, those run by the Voluntary Sector. Officers highlighted that whilst Members can request Audits to be conducted, it was advised that these requests are managed through the Chair of the Audit Committee.

The Audit Committee noted the report.

7. AUDIT COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Forward Work Programme up to December 2016 was presented for Member consideration.

A Member raised concerns about the Forward Work Programme and felt that there was little scope for Members to steer the Programme. Officers highlighted that there are a number of reports scheduled, which are subject to deadlines for consideration by the Committee, however, if there are specific topics Members would like to consider, this could be considered within the programme.

Having fully considered its detail the Audit Committee noted its content.

8. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee received and noted the following information items:-

- (1) Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.
- (2) Officers Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality.

The meeting closed at 11.43am.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 9th March 2016, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR