

EAST DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 5th August, 2008 at 7.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor P. G. Bennett - Chairman
Councillor Mrs A. Warman - Vice-Chairman

Present: Councillors R. C. Dudman, J. P. Holland, T. J. Palmer and M. G. Simper.

Also in attendance: Councillors M. C. Birr, Mrs Q. N. D. Comfort and S. G. Flower

154. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received from Councillors.

155. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

156. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8th July, 2008 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

157. Presentations by the Public

There were no questions, petitions or deputations received on this occasion.

RECOMMENDATION TO POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

158. Value for Money Strategy

The Chief Executive submitted a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Members considered the adoption of a Value for Money Strategy and recognised the significance of the Action Plan. Care should be taken to ensure that the Action Plan be devised and implemented both effectively and efficiently.

RECOMMENDED that:

- a) the draft Value for Money Strategy be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval; and that
- b) the Corporate Officer Efficiency Group be asked to develop an Action Plan for implementing the Strategy and review the Value for Money Self Assessment and report thereon to the 7th October 2008 meeting of this Committee.

Voting: Unanimous

DELEGATED BUSINESS

159. Update on Data Quality Action Plan

The Chief Executive submitted a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Committee were updated on work being undertaken to ensure data quality. Members were advised that item 1.4 of the Action Plan attached to the report had been amended and that a non-personal data sharing protocol had been agreed across Dorset. This would be signed at the Dorset Chief Executives September meeting.

RESOLVED that Members note the work being undertaken to ensure data quality.

Voting: Unanimous

160. Review of Private Sector Leasing Expenditure

The Chief Executive submitted a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Members were asked to support the targeted action to reduce Private Sector Leasing Expenditure. Members recognised the importance of how the Council interacted with private landlords and also the importance of the issue of affordable housing provision. Members acknowledged that the report was part of a much broader issue that should be considered by the new Housing Sub-Committee that was proposed by the Environment and Health and Housing Scrutiny and Policy Development Sub-Committee report on Affordable Housing.

RESOLVED that;

- a) **Members agree the 3 week void target reviewable on 31 March 2009 and to note the remainder of the report; and that**
- b) **a further report on the review of private sector leasing expenditure be submitted to the November meeting of this Committee.**

Voting: Unanimous

161. Audit Review of Corporate Land and Property Management and Asset Register

The Chief Executive submitted a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'D' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Members received the report on the findings of the Internal Auditor following the review of the systems in place for Corporate Land and Property Management, and the Asset Register.

RESOLVED that;

- a) the auditor's opinion be supported;**
- b) a report on the review by the District Valuer of the rents charged at the Town Farm Workshops be submitted to the October meeting of this Committee; and that**
- c) such a report include details of any losses made, perceived risks and deposits taken, if any, on the workshop units.**

Voting: Unanimous

162. Audit Review of Land Charges.

The Chief Executive submitted a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'E' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Members received the report on the findings of the Internal Auditor following the review of Land Charges. Officers informed Members that the £11 charge for personal searches fixed by the government did not reflect the cost to the Council of the search and that a fee in the region of £33 would be more realistic. Members learnt that officers would present a proposal to increase the charge for personal searches to the forthcoming meeting of the Local Government Association.

RESOLVED that;

- a) the auditor's opinion be supported; and that**
- b) the Policy and Resources Committee note the concerns of this Committee that the current slowdown of the property market will have a detrimental impact on the income of Land Charges.**

Voting: Unanimous

163. Audit Review of Human Resources

The Chief Executive submitted a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'F' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Members received the report on the findings of the Internal Auditor following the review of the systems in place within the Human Resources department for recruitment and training. Members expressed concern that the induction process was largely paper driven and were of the view that greater use of electronic communication would improve efficiency.

RESOLVED that the auditor's opinion be supported.

164. Progress Report on Implementing Audit Recommendations

The Chief Executive submitted a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'G' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Members noted the progress made by service managers in implementing recommendations agreed with both the internal and external auditors.

Following advice from officers, Members updated action points up to the end of August, 2008.

With reference to item 2 in the appendix to the report, Members were advised that LalPac had now resolved the issue of the corrupted SQL data tables on the licensing database.

Members were updated on item 5 of the appendix to the report on the production of service level agreements with outside bodies by the Payroll Department. Final implementation would be delayed to allow officers to consider the charge of a small administrative fee to the outside bodies.

RESOLVED that;

a) Members note the content of the report and agree any variations to previously agreed action dates where necessary; and that

b) a report be submitted to the October meeting of this Committee on the cost to the Council to provide the payroll service to outside bodies and the likely charges to be applied.

Voting: Unanimous

165. Audit Programme 2008/2009

The Chief Executive submitted a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'H' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Members were advised on the progress against the audit timetable.

RESOLVED that;

a) the Committee approve the updated Audit Review Timetable; and that

b) the Committee request the Driving at Work Policy be referred back to the Policy and Resources Committee for amendment.

Voting: Unanimous

The meeting ended at 9.25 p.m.

CHAIRMAN