

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Audit & Governance Committee

Committee Room, Riverbank House, Bideford

29 June 2010

PRESENT:

Councillor G Lee (Chairman)

Councillors Mrs C B Church, P J Pester, P W Pennington, D M Lausen
and A J Saywell

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr G Booth (Head of Finance & Performance)

Mr S Harding (Chief Accountant)

Mr K Miles (Solicitor)

Mrs J Quick (Audit Manager)

Mr S Johnson (Audit Commission)

Mr A Rayner (Independent Representative)

7. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

8. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 21 JUNE 2010

The Minutes as tabled were agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

9. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA PARTS I AND II

The agenda as circulated was agreed,

(Vote: For – unanimous)

10. URGENT MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD

There were no urgent matters

11. EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT AND BRIEFING

Mr Johnson presented the Audit Commission's draft report under this heading.

He explained that this report detailed progress to date and that in future, all Audit Reports will be presented to this Committee. He added that audit of the Statement

of Accounts would start next week.

As a result of the change in government, the Use of Resources audit area had ceased and will not be scored for 2009/10. However, the work completed will inform the Value for Money audit area, and Mr Johnson stated that he expected to give a clean Value for Money conclusion.

In view of the consequent reduction in work, Mr Johnson advised that the Council's 2010/11 annual audit fee letter already sent to the Council would be replaced by a new fee letter which would be sent to the Council in the autumn of 2010.

The Annual Governance Report and Value for Money conclusion will be presented to the next meeting.

In conclusion, he recommended a number of recent publications by the Audit Commission.

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: that the External Audit Progress Report and Briefing be noted.

(Vote: For - unanimous)

Mr Johnson left the meeting at 4.45pm

12. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2009/2010

The Chief Accountant gave a presentation in this respect. He explained the background to the Statements and what was required by Law and Best Accounting Practice. He also explained that requirements had changed since the previous year and outlined the new legal requirements.

He added that the Statements of Account must be signed by 30 June 2010 and for a period of time afterwards be available for inspection by the public.

The Chief Accountant provided a detailed explanation of the Financial Statements and Notes to the Accounts.

A substantial and comprehensive period of questions and answers followed with particular emphasis on the Council's net worth, the valuation of assets, and the pension scheme contribution.

With regard to the Pension Scheme, the Audit Manager agreed to obtain a copy of Devon County Council's Audit Report for discussion by this Committee. It was also suggested that the relevant officer from Devon County Council be asked to attend when this matter is discussed, and also to obtain copies of report that are presented to Devon County Council's Pension Committee.

The Solicitor left the meeting at 6.05pm.

It was proposed by Cllr Pester, seconded by Cllr Lausen and

Resolved: that that Financial Statements be approved, subject to external audit, and signed by the Chairman

(Vote: For – unanimous)

13. AUDIT FEES

In view of the expectation of a new fee letter from the Audit Commission, this topic was deferred.

14. REDIRECTION OF EMAILS

The Chairman confirmed that Full Council, on 28 June 2010, had unanimously accepted his proposal that the re-direction of emails be ceased from close of business on 16 July 2010.

15. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Audit Manager advised that the subject of public participation at all committee meetings was under review. A meeting of the Constitution Working Group will be convened in this respect.

16. TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chairman asked whether there would be any objection to the next meeting scheduled for 28 September 2010 to commence at 2pm.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

It was agreed that the commencement time for the following meeting scheduled for 30 November 2010 would be determined at the September meeting.

17. FORWARD PLAN

A copy of the Forward Plan was circulated. The Audit Manager advised that further training would be arranged which would concentrate on the risk element of governance.

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: that the Forward Plan, as circulated, be agreed.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

18. FRAUD AWARENESS

The Audit Manager presented her report and referred to the appendix containing the Audit Commission Checklist: Protecting the Public Purse.

Using recognised good guidance principles for fraud, she had completed the checklist as far as she was able and asked Members for their input.

In addition, the Audit Commission's Annual Fraud and Corruption Survey of the Council's data must be submitted by the 30 June 2010. The Audit Manager circulated a copy of the completed survey form and explained that this information informed government of how fraud is understood in local authorities.

A period of discussion followed with particular emphasis on item 4.1 – Council Tax single discount fraud.

Cllr Church asked what controls were in place to ensure grant monies were spent for the purpose they were intended and suggested that this Committee scrutinise the controls in place to ensure they are being followed.

Officers agreed to research this request and report back to a future committee meeting.

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: that the report and supporting information be noted.

(Vote: For - unanimous)

The Meeting closed at 6.45pm

Signed:

Date