

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

Monday, 16th November, 2015

Present:- Councillor Ms Sarah Pickup – in the Chair

Councillors Burgess, Dymond, Loades, Owen, Waring and Hambleton

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

2. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record.

3. HEALTH AND SAFETY

A report was submitted to inform Members of issues and trends regarding health and safety at the council.

Officers stated that there had been an update to the Corporate Health and Safety Policy and Employees Handbook, which incorporated changes to Health and Safety Legislation and the revision of some internal Health and Safety Policies.

It was also confirmed that there was currently a full review being undertaken in relation to lone working and a questionnaire had been sent to all Business Managers. Members queried whether lone working included home working, it was confirmed that this was the case and that home working would be included in the review.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

4. CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2015

A report was submitted to inform Members of the progress made by the Council in enhancing and embedding risk management for the period July to September 2015, including progress made in managing identified corporate risks.

A new risk had been added and details of this were at 3.4 in the report. The new risk was shown to have a final rating of High Red 9 in relation to the risk of failure of staff to transfer on to revised contract conditions in respect of the Implementation of the new Recycling and Refuse service. This risk had however been reduced since the report had been published and would not be included on the next report.

A query was raised as to why there was no high risk relating to the financial situation of the Council. Officers stated that a plan was in place regarding the current financial position of the Council which covered a number of different risks. The fact that action plans were in place meant that the risks were not currently high enough to trigger being reported to the Committee. Assurances were given by the Sections151 Officer and Grant Thornton regarding this.

Resolved:

- (a) That the Committee note the progress that has been made in managing the risks identified within the Strategic, Operational, Project and Partnership Risk Registers, where applicable.
- (b) That the Committee note the point 2.1.1 showing no overdue risks.
- (c) That the Committee note the point 2.2.1 advising of no risk level increases.
- (d) That the Committee note the point 2.2.2 regarding a new risk that has been identified between July to September 2015.
- (e) That the Committee Identify, as appropriate, individual risk profiles to be scrutinised in more detail at the next meeting of the Committee.

5. TREASURY MANAGEMENT

A report was submitted requesting that the Committee receive the Treasury Management Half Yearly Report for 2015/16 and that it review the Treasury Management activity for this period.

It was highlighted on page 18 of the agenda that a further payment from the Heritable Bank had been received taking the amount of money recovered to 98%.

Resolved: That the Treasury Management Half Yearly Report for 2015/16 be received.

6. ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER

Resolved: That the Annual Audit Letter be received.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT (QUARTER TWO)

A report was submitted in relation to the work undertaken by the Internal Audit section during the period 1st July to 30th September 2015. The report identified the key issues raised. The full individual reports issued to Officers contained the key issues plus a variety of minor issues and recommendations.

The Audit Manager stated that the section was currently implementing a new audit system and that training regarding this was taking longer than expected.

The attention of the Committee was drawn to paragraph 2.7 of the report which dealt with corporate fraud.

Since 1 May 2015 there had been 31 cases investigated in relation to non-benefit fraud which had included Single Person Discount Fraud (SPD) and Council Tax Reduction Fraud, Blue Badge and undeclared residences. Work was being carried out with Stoke on Trent City Council in relation to the North West Staffordshire Corporate Fraud Hub which would see joint working across both the City Council and also Staffordshire County Council and a number of Registered Social Landlords, including Aspire Housing.

Resolved: That the report be received and noted.

8. **ADOPTION OF INTERNAL AUDIT HIGH RISK RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY OF ASSURANCE 1 JULY TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2015 (QUARTER TWO)**

A report was submitted regarding any outstanding high risk recommendations to the Audit and Risk Committee on a quarterly basis and where necessary to request Members' approval to the Executive Directors requested actions in respect of the recommendations and proposed target dates.

The report also sought to provide Members with an assurance opinion on internal controls over Council Services.

Some concerns were raised regarding the fact that Planning was listed as well controlled. The Audit Manager confirmed that out of the sample cases investigated this was the case. It was suggested that in the future a larger sample could possibly be used.

Resolved: That the action of your officers and levels of assurance be noted

9. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Business.

COUNCILLOR MS SARAH PICKUP
Chair