

AUDIT & PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

At a Special Meeting of the Audit & Performance Review Committee held in the Council Chambers, Clydebank Town Hall, Dumbarton Road, Clydebank on Wednesday, 25 March 2009 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors George Black, Jim Brown, Geoff Calvert, John Millar and Martin Rooney; Mr Francis McNeill, Representative, Community Councils and Ms Selina Ross, Representative, Voluntary Sector.

Attending: David McMillan, Chief Executive; Joyce White, Executive Director of Corporate Services; David Connell, Manager of Finance and ICT; Lorraine Coyne, Manager of Audit; Colin McDougall, Section Head, Internal Audit; Joe Gillespie, Section Head (Operations); David Webster, Performance and Improvement Manager; Marion Smith, Section Head (Revenues & Benefits); Jack Stevenson, Section Head, Property Management; Lyn Hughes, HR Adviser (Wellbeing and Attendance) HR & Organisational Development; Andrew Fraser, Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services and Craig Stewart, Committee Officer, Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services.

Also Attending: Keith Macpherson, Manager, KPMG LLP, Lesley McGiffen, Best Value Audit Manager, Audit Scotland and Phyllis Gillan, Association of Clydebank Residents Groups.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Margaret Bootland and Craig McLaughlin, Mr John Corcoran, Representative, Business Community; and Hugh O'Donnell, Representative, Tenants and Residents Groups.

Councillor Martin Rooney in the Chair

CHAIR'S REMARKS

Before commencing with the business of the meeting, the Chair, Councillor Rooney, welcomed Keith Macpherson, Manager, KPMG LLP, Lesley McGiffen, Best Value Audit Manager, Audit Scotland and Phyllis Gillan, Association of Clydebank Residents Groups to the meeting and thereafter introduced them to the Committee.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of the Audit & Performance Review Committee held on 14 January 2009 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

AUDIT PLAN OVERVIEW 2008/09

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services presenting, for information, KPMG LLP's Audit Plan Overview 2008/09.

Having heard Mr. Macpherson, Manager, KPMG LLP, the Chief Executive and relevant officers in further explanation of the Audit Plan Overview and in answer to Members' questions, it was agreed:-

- (1) to note the terms of the discussion that had taken place in respect of this matter;
- (2) to request that an update report be provided by KPMG for the next meeting of the Committee; and
- (3) otherwise to note the contents of the report and Appendix.

INSPECTION OF HOUSING BENEFIT SERVICE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing an update on the inspection of the Council's housing benefit service carried out by Audit Scotland in December 2008.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Head of Finance and ICT in elaboration and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note that Audit Scotland had now approved the draft Action Plan submitted by the Council to minimise risks and continually improve the Housing Benefits service; and
- (2) otherwise to note the statements contained in the Audit Scotland report on the service.

SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORTING

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services advising on the current position and the proposed actions in relation to absence management within West Dunbartonshire Council and reporting on the levels of employee sickness absence over the following periods:-

- (a) 1 July 2008 to 30 September 2008 (Quarter 2)
- (b) 1 October 2008 to 31 December 2008 (Quarter 3)

(c) 1 April 2007 to 31 December 2008

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and relevant officers in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report; and
- (2) to request a further report to the next meeting of the Committee on measures designed to deal more effectively with absence management along with the setting of targets for improving performance and efficiency.

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT ON RENT HARMONISATION

A report was submitted by the Manager of Audit advising on the outcome of the investigation into the implementation of the Council's Rent Harmonisation programme.

After discussion and having heard the Manager of Audit and the Chief Executive in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note that the issue of Rent Harmonisation should be completely reviewed as a matter of urgency and a robust model put in place which supported the delivery of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard;
- (2) to note that the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development had confirmed that this was now in hand and consultants had been engaged to ensure that the rent setting model was transparent and clearly communicated to all stakeholders;
- (3) to note that a Briefing Note was issued to Members on 29 January 2009, which provided details on how this issue had been taken forward. In this respect, implementation would be closely monitored and any financial model updated annually to ensure that all stakeholders were informed of progress;
- (4) that as the Chief Executive was referred to in the report, in respect of previous roles performed by him, the Monitoring Officer would prepare an investigatory report under the Council's disciplinary scheme which would consider if action was appropriate in respect of the failure to implement the Council decisions of 5 August 1998 and 9 June 2004 and what lessons could be learned for the future; and
- (5) that consideration should be given to including all actions arising from Council and Committee decisions on to the Council's performance management system, Covalent, to ensure that officers kept track of decisions to be implemented and management and members could monitor progress.

REVIEW OF PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED WITHIN INTERNAL AUDIT AND EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive:-

- (a) presenting the Internal Audit Section system action plans issued to directorates from 1 December 2008 to 31 January 2009; and
- (b) advising of the progress being made in actioning recommendations contained within key Internal Audit and External Audit reports which management have committed to implementing.

After discussion and having heard the Section Head, Internal Audit in elaboration and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT TO 31 DECEMBER 2008

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive advising of the work undertaken by the Internal Audit Section against the Audit Plan 2008/09.

After discussion and having heard the Manager of Audit in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) that the Quarterly Progress Report, appended to the report, should be reformatted in future in order that information on Actual Time and Variance could be shown in respect of each quarter; and
- (2) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

ACTIVITY ON WHISTLEBLOWING HOTLINE TO 31 DECEMBER 2008

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive advising of the level of activity on the whistleblowing hotline.

After discussion and having heard the Manager of Audit in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the report.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT, STRATEGIC PLANNING AND THE SOLACE 'GOLDEN THREAD' STUDY

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive:-

- (a) presenting an update on the implementation of the new performance management framework; and
- (b) providing an update on the progress of corporate and departmental planning and the SOLACE 'Golden Thread' study.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Executive and the Performance and Improvement Manager in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note that the Chief Executive would provide Members with further information on concerns raised in the SOLACE Golden Thread Study (Appendix 2 to the report) with regard to occasional "politicisation" of scrutiny;
- (2) that the Chief Executive would arrange to liaise with Lesley Bloomer, Associate of SOLACE Enterprises, with a view to investigating the possibility of having a presentation to Members on the 'Golden Thread' Study; and
- (3) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive reviewing the performance of the Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) and including performance information to Q3 2008/09 (to end December 08).

After discussion and having heard the Performance and Improvement Manager and the Chief Executive in elaboration and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note that all SPIs were now monitored regularly by Departments with progress being reported to respective Service Committees;
- (2) to note that all poorly performing SPIs should be reported to their respective Service Committee(s) with an Action Plan, to be agreed by the Service Committee, which would be subject to the Audit and Performance Committee overseeing the actions taken, as a check on satisfactory progress; and
- (3) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 12.40 p.m.