Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

Wednesday, 22nd October, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor J Bale in the Chair

Councillors D Blackburn, G Driver, P Grahame, M Iqbal, G Latty, N Taggart, C Campbell and G Kirkland

Apologies Councillor J Elliott and Mr M Wilkinson

43 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

44 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no resolutions to exclude the public.

45 Late Items

There were no late items added to the agenda.

46 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

47 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillor Elliott and Mike Wilkinson.

48 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 29th September 2008

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meeting held on 29th September 2008 be approved as a correct record.

(At a later point in the meeting, Councillor Taggart requested that the minutes be amended to reflect that he was present at the meeting, which was accepted.)

49 Matters Arising

Further to Minute 36 (Matters Arising), it was reported that the Business Continuity Plan for Eastmoor Secure Unit had now been received, and a report regarding this would be presented at the next Committee meeting.

Further to Minute 38 (Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter 2007/08), the proposal to raise with Scrutiny Board Chairs the use of information contained in the Ombudsman's Annual Letter to identify possible areas of scrutiny was welcomed.

Councillor Grahame arrived during the consideration of this item.

50   **Update Report on Risk Management Arrangements**

The Principal Risk Management Officer presented a report of the Director of Resources providing the Committee with an update on the progress of embedding the Council's risk management arrangements in line with the approved corporate policy.

In response to Members' queries, it was reported that the potential impact of the economic downturn had been added to the Corporate Risk Register, and was being assessed by the Corporate Leadership Team. Members were also informed that the risk management software being used by the Council was an 'off the shelf' package, however additional functionality was required due to the complex nature of the organisation.

A concern was raised regarding the risks associated with unconstitutional decision making, and some examples of decisions which may have been implemented prior to the conclusion of the call-in period were given. These included a delegated decision relating to cemeteries and crematoria fees and charges, and an Executive Board decision.

It was reported that a sample of decisions made was currently being audited to assess whether the correct procedures were being followed, the outcomes of which will be reported at a future Committee meeting. It was also agreed that all Directors and Chief Officers would be e-mailed to remind them of the procedures related to call-in.

RESOLVED –
(a)   That the progress report on the Council's risk management arrangements be noted and approved; and
(b)   That the outcomes of the audit on decision making be presented at a future Committee meeting.

Councillor Iqbal arrived prior to the commencement of this item.

51   **Information Security**

The Head of Information and Knowledge Management presented a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement) outlining the risks to the Council in relation to information security (incorporating data

security), how these risks are currently being addressed and the steps being taken to guarantee information security.

During the discussion of the report, the following points were raised:
(a) Information governance includes ensuring that the public are aware of how the Council protects information;
(b) A completely fail-safe situation is not possible to achieve;
(c) The effectiveness of staff induction processes in relation to information governance will be tested via an audit process which will include a series of random checks throughout the year;
(d) It is important that Officers are aware of all information held by the Council whether it is held electronically or in hard copies;
(e) The Council's wholly owned subsidiaries should adhere to the same information governance standards as the Council; and
(f) It is important to ensure that the Council's information is secure when it is shared with partner organisations.

Further to Members' queries, it was agreed that a report should be brought back to the Committee regarding the Council's e-mail policy, information retention policy and the rules that Members should adhere to when handling information relating to their constituents. It was also agreed that, from now on, a yearly report regarding information security should be presented to the Committee.

RESOLVED –
(a) That the contents of the report be noted;
(b) That a report be brought back to the Committee regarding the Council's e-mail and information retention policies, and guidance for Members on handling constituents' details; and
(c) That a yearly report regarding information security be presented to the Committee.

Councillor Taggart arrived during the consideration of this item.

52   Developing the Internet for Community Engagement

The Corporate Consultation Manager presented a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement) updating Members on the progress made in developing internet-based community engagement tools, with a focus on the Talking Point community engagement database.

Members raised several queries regarding the report, and in response they were informed that officers were researching new technologies which could be added to the website to improve community engagement, that Talking Point will be included in the Delivering Successful Change guidance, and that as it was not possible for all activity to be logged on Talking Point, the most suitable types of information that should be included would be assessed.

It was agreed that a progress report should be brought back to the Committee, including a clear definition of what Talking Point will be used for,

and what has been achieved so far (in percentage terms). The report should also consider the inclusion of scrutiny on Talking Point and the possibility of broadcasting Council meetings via the internet.

RESOLVED –
(a) That the information in the report be considered; and
(b) That a report be brought back to the Committee regarding the progress made regarding Talking Point, including the addition of Scrutiny Boards and the possibility of broadcasting Council meetings via the internet.

53 Work Programme

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report notifying Members of the draft work programme for 2008/09.

Due to the number of unscheduled items, and the agreement to add further items on the Business Continuity Plan for Eastmoor Secure Unit, the risks associated with decision making, Information Security and Talking Point, it was agreed that an additional meeting, to be held in February 2009, would be arranged. It was also agreed that the meeting due to be held on 29th April 2009 would be re-arranged, due to the Chair being unable to attend.

RESOLVED – That the draft work programme for the remainder of the municipal year be noted.