

**MINUTES of the meeting of Standards and Audit Committee held on 6
December 2012 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors Tunde Ojetola (Chair), Cathy Kent, Diana Hale and Simon Wootton

Independent Members: Jason Oliver

Apologies: Councillor Martin Healy, Councillor Terry Hipsey, Martin Hone and Rhona Long

In attendance: Gary Clifford – RSM Tenon
David Foley - RSM Tenon
Sean Clark – Head of Corporate Finance
Ms W Borgartz – Ernst & Young
Andy Owen – Performance and Risk Officer
Kenna-Victoria Martin – Senior Democratic Officer

The Chair informed all present that the meeting was to be recorded for publication on the Council's website and would normally be available within 3 working days of the meeting.

1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of Standards and Audit Committee, held on 20 September 2012, were approved as a correct record.

2 Additional Information

There were no additional items

3 Declarations of Interest

Jason Oliver declared an interest in Items 8 and 9 as he was a Governor for The Grays School Media Art College.

Councillor Hale declared an interest in Item 8 as she was a Member of the South Essex College Corporation.

Councillor Kent declared an interest in Items 8 and 9 as her son attended the Grays School Media Art College.

Councillor Ojetola declared an interest in Item 7 in that he was a Member of the Planning Committee.

4 Standard Training

The Deputy Head of Legal Services gave the Committee training on Thurrock Council's Code of Conduct, Thurrock Council's complaint procedure, the Standard and Audit Committee terms of reference and gave Members examples of the Complaints and Dispensation forms.

5 To receive Items deferred from the Previous Meeting

Mr Foley from RSM Tenon introduced the report which explained that a plan had been produced for Thurrock Council to protect its assets and combat fraud. The Committee were informed that to react to fraud as and when could be costly and that the Council would need to seek assurances, so that this didn't occur.

Members were taken through the report by the Mr Foley who explained that by having a plan in place would assist recovery should anything go wrong.

The Committee enquired as to how Thurrock Council could take the plan forward and how it would be managed. Officers informed the Committee that at a previous Committee, Members received a report on a Corporate Fraud Team and that this was still an option which the Council was investigating.

The Chair of the Committee asked who was leading the Corporate Plan. The Committee were told that the Director of Finance and Corporate Governance would be the Lead Officer dealing with the Corporate Fraud team.

RESOLVED:

That the Standards and Audit Committee noted the report.

6 Review of the Strategic/Corporate Risk and Opportunity Register – Quarter 3

The Performance and Risk Officer produced a report to the Committee which provided Members with the Quarter 3 progress on the changes to the strategic/corporate risk and opportunity register.

Members enquired as to why the Purfleet Regeneration Project was on the register twice. The Committee were informed that it was due to one being an opportunity and one being a risk.

RESOLVED That Standards and Audit Committee:

- **Considered the changes to items contained in the Quarter 3 Dashboard (Appendix 1).**
- **Considered the 'In Focus' items and the management response arrangements for the issues (Appendix 2) identified by Performance Leads**

7 Internal Audit Progress Report 2012/13

RSM Tenon produced a report to Members which explained the progress against the internal audit plan 2012/13. Officers informed Members that Internal Audit now provided four levels of assurance opinion, opinions used a Red/Amber/Green assurance level and reports were categorised as: Green; Amber/Green (positive assurance opinions); Amber/Red (some assurance but a number of weaknesses) and Red (negative assurance opinion).

Members were then taken through the report, it was highlighted that there were nine reports which had received a green assurance and two reports had received an Amber/Red assurance for the framework within their area.

Members queried whether changes were being made to the It management as IT was now Serco. Officers explained that the Council were taking a different approach, however systems were being updated and funding was being put into systems

RESOLVED that the Standards & Audit Committee:

Considered reports issued by Internal Audit in relation to the 2012/13 audit plan.

- **Noted the areas of Internal Audit activity which were not formally reported to the Standards & Audit Committee.**
- **Noted the progress against the Internal Audit Plan for 2012/13**
- **Receive an update on security at the next meeting**

8 Follow up of High and Medium Recommendations

Officers introduced a report to Members which set out the progress against the implementation of high and medium recommendations.

Members enquired as to how the recommendations which were set were followed up. Officers explained that Education Finance followed up the recommendations given by RSM Tenon.

RESOLVED:

That the Standards & Audit Committee noted the progress made by management in implementing high and medium recommendations reported in the reviews identified at 3.1.

9 Reports from the Audit Commission: Annual Audit Letter 2011/12 and Certification of Claims and Returns - Annual Report

The Head of Corporate Finance explained that attached to the report were the final reports from the Audit Commission.

Members queried the HRA subsidy; Officers informed the Committee that as the quality of working papers were poor in 2010/11 there was a change in the fee.

The Committee were assured that lessons had been learnt and that staff had been retrained.

RESOLVED:

That the Standards and Audit Committee noted the reports attached at Appendices 1 and 2, and the agreed actions.

10 Work Programme

The Committee discussed the work programme and suggested the following:

- Standards Report from the Monitoring Officer
- Audit Charter
- Audit protocol
- Quarter 4
- Report back on Adult Social Care

The meeting finished at 9.28.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIRMAN

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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or alternatively e-mail kmartin@thurrock.gov.uk**