

MINUTES of the meeting of the Standards and Audit Committee held on 18 July 2013 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors Martin Healy (Chair), Yash Gupta, Cathy Kent, Charlie Key (Substituting Tunde Ojetola), Simon Wotton (left at 7.50) and Terry Hipsey

Co-opted Members: Stephen Rosser

Apologies: Councillor Tunde Ojetola, Jason Oliver, Rohna Long, Gary Clifford, Gavin Dennett and Debbie Hanson

In attendance: Sean Clark – Head of Corporate Finance
Andy Owen – Risk and Performance Officer
Lucy Magill – Director of Environment and Public Protection
Les Billingham – Head of Adult Social care
Nigel Byatt – Head of Business Services
Jonathan Harris – Programme Manager
James Wade – Strategic Lead
Andrew Milliard – Head of Planning and Transportation
Wendy Borgartz- Ernst and Young
Daniel Toohey – Principal Solicitor Contracts and Procurement
Kenna-Victoria Martin – Democratic Services

11 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Standards and Audit Committee, held on 18 April 2013, were approved as a correct record.

The Chair took the opportunity to inform Members that the letter which they had requested from the Education Department had been received and a hard copy had been provided.

12 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no such items.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hipsey declared a Non- Pecuniary interest in Item 5, in that he was the Chair of the Planning Committee.

Councillor Healy declared a Non- Pecuniary interest in Item 5, in that he was a Member of the Planning Committee.

14 REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC/ CORPORATE RISK AND OPPORTUNITY REGISTER - 1ST QUARTER

The Performance and Risk Officer introduced the report, which outlined the review of the risk and opportunity register. He informed the Committee that the report was deferred from the last meeting as lead officers were not available to cover the items in question.

The Chair explained that Members had concerns with some of the items on the register. Lead officers provided a summary of the position and answered Members questions on the following items:

ICT Infrastructure

The Head of Business Services explained to the Committee, that supporting the Transformation Programme meant that the risk was critical and would stay at critical until the programme had finished. Members were informed movement over the past few months meant that the risk classification will get lower, but continue to be high on the risk agenda.

Committee Members were notified that the ICT Strategy had been refreshed and was taken to the March 2013 meeting of Cabinet. Serco, as ICT provider, are working with the Council to develop and initiate an implementation plan to satisfy the strategy and support the transformation programme. Initial improvements had been made to Thurrock Council in the way of the new layout of the fourth floor and wifi being available within the Civic Offices.

Adult Social Care, Quality v Cost

The Head of Adult Social Care informed Members of the Committee, that the high rating was link to cost and this was a national issue and the realisation that the cost which is paid for care is considerably low. It was explained to Members that although Thurrock didn't have these issues, it had a local manifestation however; it was thought that Thurrock had a strong compliance which enabled the service to be managed and the right action to be taken when needed.

Officers notified the Committee that unannounced visits to all of the Residential Care Homes around the Borough were carried out and it was seen that excellent care was being given to vulnerable people.

The Head of Adult Social Care explained that their budget was unpredictable and officers had to be cautious when supplying resources. He explained that this was a national issue within Social Care however, Thurrock Council had a very good safeguarding team and it was thought that officers managed this risk very well.

Business Continuity

The Director of Environment and Public Protection explained to the Committee that Business Continuity was essential for Thurrock Council and a report had been taken to Cabinet in May 2013, with regards to a refresh of the Councils Business Continuity. She further explained that it was the responsible of each team within the Council to keep their Business Continuity Plans up to date.

Members of the Committee were informed that the risk was expected to stay high, until such time as more testing could be carried out, tests which had already been carried out included desk side testing and the closure of a floor within the Civic Offices.

The Director of Environment and Public Protection informed the Committee that a report would be coming back to the Committee in the Autumn with regards to the Councils Corporate Business Continuity Plan and testing update which had been taken to Cabinet.

Purfleet Regeneration Project

The Project Support Officer informed Members that the Purfleet Regeneration Project would provide a new town centre, primary school and 300 homes within Purfleet.

Members queried that the target date was June 2014, meaning that officers had just under a year to complete. Officers agreed that it would be challenging however, they were confident that the target date was doable.

Waste Round Optimisation

Members queried the rating of the risk, with regards to the current situation and the day to day issues which were arising. The Director of Environment and Public Protection clarified to the Committee that the risk was new and when it was first assessed it was thought that it was marginal/significant. However with recent issues it was expected that the risk would be higher in the quarter two report.

The Director continued to explain that the Council was still in line to make their financial savings however, the service quality offered and the Council's reputation still had a few issues which were being looked at.

Children's Social Care

The Strategic Lead informed the Committee that the risk rating was as one would expect with regards to safe guarding and cost. He explained that in 2012 the department had a good inspection with good rating with regards to looked after children. The department were currently working on expanding family groups conferences and moving this forward, along with the offering help to those in need earlier. It was hoped that this would benefit the Council.

Road/Transport Infrastructure

Members praised the Head of Planning and Transportation on the reduction of the target rating compared to the current rating and queried if it was possible. The Head of Planning and Transportation informed Members that this risk was related to transport infrastructure and the work being carried out with regards

to Junctions30/31, the M25, widening of the A13 and the lobbying of the government for free flow tolling over the Dartford Crossing in addition to work with National Rail.

London Gateway

The Head of Planning and Transportation explained that this was an opportunity rather than a risk and although it had increased it was the likelihood of the project actually being delivered, which had increased. He continued to inform members that the port continues to be developed at a pace and Marks and Spencer's have obtained the first building.

Resolved :

- i) That Standards and Audit Committee notes the changes to items contained in the Quarter 1 Dashboard (Appendix 1).**
- ii) That Standards and Audit Committee notes the 'In Focus' items and the management response arrangements for the issues identified by Directors Board and Performance Board (Appendix 2).**

15 EXTERNAL AUDIT: AUDIT PROGRESS

The external auditors introduced the report to the Committee, explaining that the report set out the work which had currently been carried out; Members were informed that as yet there were no issues significant arising from the work which had been undertaken so far.

The Committee were further informed that the financial statement which had been circulated to Members, was of a better quality than the external auditors had received in previous years.

Members were notified that the external Auditors were due to commence their detailed work on the Financial Statement on the 22 July 2013.

Resolved that the Standards and Audit Committee noted the report.

16 FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Head of Corporate Finance introduced the report to the Committee, explaining that although officers were not required to bring the financial statement to the Committee as yet they had done so for Members reassurance.

The Committee were informed that the Annual Governance Statement set out the Council's responsibilities for putting in place the appropriate arrangements

for the governance of its affairs. It was explained that the Finance Statement set out the Council's income and expenditure for the 2012/2013 financial year.

The Head of Corporate Finance offered to Members of the Committee the opportunity for either one to one or group sessions to go through the Financial Statement, so that Members could have a better understanding for when the statement went to the September meeting for approval.

Resolved that the Financial Statement and Annual Governance be noted and that officers report back with a final version in September.

17 WORK PROGRAMME

Members discussed the work programme for the municipal year and queried the RIPA item for the September meeting. The principal Solicitor for Contracts and Procurement explained to Members of the Committee that RIPA stood for Regulation of Investigation Powers Act and was to do with surveillance. It was explained that every 2 years it was required that an OSE Inspection took place. Thurrock Council was due to have an inspector visit during October 2013, therefore officers wanted to bring the RIPA policy to Committee for approval.

The meeting finished at 8.20pm.

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**