

The **AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE** met at **WARWICK** on the **21 FEBRUARY 2007**.

Present: -

Independent Members

John Bridgeman (Chair),
Mark Magowan.

County Councillors

Sarah Boad,
Les Caborn,
Gordon Collett (replacing John Vereker),
Mick Jones,
Tim Naylor,
Bob Stevens.

Also present:

Councillor Peter Fowler (Cabinet Member for
Performance and Development).

Officers

Adult, Health and Community Services Directorate.

Donna Rutter, Service Manager (Local Teams - Older
People & Physical Disability) - for item 5
Ron Williamson, Head of Resources – for item 5

Performance and Development Directorate

David Carter, Strategic Director,
Pete Keeley, Principal Committee Administrator,
Gary Rollason, Audit and Risk Manager,

Resources Directorate.

Joanna Rhodes, Head of Strategic Resource
Development,

1. General

(1) An apology for absence

was received from Councillor John Vereker, who had been replaced for the meeting by Councillor Gordon Collett.

(2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillor Sarah Boad declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 12 – Internal Audit Report in view of her husband's membership of the Supporting People Board.

(3) Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 22 November 2006.

Councillor Sarah Boad indicated that her declaration of interest at the previous meeting was made because she was a Governor of the North Leamington School not the Lillington Primary.

It was then Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Committee's 22 November 2006 meeting be approved as amended.

(4) Matters Arising.

(i) Minute 2 – Annual Standards Board Conference

Members noted that the Members Register of Interest was being made available in the Ante Chamber for members to examine and keep up to date

2. Consultation on Amendments to the Member Code of Conduct.

The Committee considered the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which advised the Cabinet of the Government consultation on proposed changes to the Member Code of Conduct and sought approval to the suggested response to the consultation.

Following introductory comments from David Carter, the Strategic Director of Performance and Development, Members discussed several aspects of the report and made the following points:

- o With regard to paragraph 3 the word "or" should be added at the end of each of the sub-paragraphs under 3(a)
- o A further report should be submitted to the Committee clarifying the Council's Whistle Blowing Code and at the situation regarding the disclosure of confidential information.
- o With regard to the wording relating to the prohibition on members of overview and scrutiny committees scrutinising decisions of bodies of the authority of which they are also member, members noted that the wording also applies to co-opted members of an overview and scrutiny committee.

Resolved:

That the Cabinet be informed that the Committee supports the proposed draft response.

3. 2006/07 Draft Annual Report and Work Programme

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development. The report proposes the content of the draft annual report 2006/07 and identified issues for inclusion in the work programme of the Committee for 2007/08.

Following discussion it was Resolved:

That the –

- (1) Committee endorses the contents and format of its annual report 2006/07.
- (2) Committee endorse the suggested work programme for 2007/08.
- (3) Strategic Director of Performance and Development be authorised to finalise the annual report in consultation with the Chair for onward submission to Council.

4. Standards Boards Bulletins

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which related to Bulletin Nos. 31 and 32 issued by the Standards Board in November 2006.

John Bridgeman reported that he was to attend a mock hearing and would report back to the Committee.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- Investigating officers were normally internal audit officers or senior lawyers.
- District/borough/parish Councils had not taken up the council's offer re use of staff for investigations.
- Details of Annual Assemblies of Standards Committee should, wherever possible be circulated to the Committee

Resolved:

That the Audit and Standards Committee notes Bulletin Nos 31 and 32 issued by the Standards Board.

5. Case Recording in Adult Social Care.

The Committee considered a report from Graeme Betts, Strategic Director of Adult Community and Health updating the committee on the standards of case recording in Adult Social Care. The Committee had previously expressed concern about the standard of case recording.

The report took account of the regular internal audit of case recording, the audit commissioned by the Strategic Director of Adult Health & Community Services and audits by Internal Audit & Risk Management. The report noted that case file recording would be scrutinised by the external Older Peoples Inspection currently being undertaken by Commission for Social Care Inspection. The report highlighted the developments that will take place to modernise assessment and case recording in Adult Social Care Services.

Following introductory comments from Donna Rutter, Service Manager (Local Teams - Older People & Physical Disability) and Ron Williamson, Head of Resources, Members discussed several aspects of the reports and made the following points :

- (1) The importance of giving a higher priority to maintaining case records was acknowledged in the new Directorate.
- (2) There had been progress resulting from quarterly audits over the last year.
- (3) Training through induction focuses on the care planning element
- (4) New systems were being introduced including the interactive use of tablet computers for mobile working.
- (5) Older people cases were left on file for monitoring purposes until the persons passes away.
- (6) Case loads of practitioners varied. The number of total cases would be reported back.
- (7) Limited resources restricted the amount of time spent with cases and impacted on the records kept.
- (8) Staff would be supported through training in the operation of the new system and ICT equipment.
- (9) There had not been a need to take any disciplinary action regarding maintaining case records.
- (10) The proposed arrangements would enhance the operation of the combined teams established under joint working with the NHS.
- (11) Duplication of records would be avoided.
- (12) Audit should consider the best way forward in keeping the Committee up to date with progress.
- (13) Consideration should be given to involving the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the arrangements.
- (14) The Committee should be advised of the outcome of the Older Peoples Inspection to see if the Committee could offer any assistance in reducing risks to adults in care.

Resolved:

That the committee note the arrangements in place within Adult Social Care services to monitor and improve standards of case file recording and request the submission of regular reports.

6. Risk Management

The report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development was considered.

The report proposed the refinement of the existing documentation that supports risk management within the Council in terms of content and structure.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- o All managers had responsibility for risk management and each directorate had procedures to identify what action became necessary.
- o The key responsibilities for managing risk should include the specific role of the Chief Executive.
- o The Councils “golden thread” referred to in Policy 5 – Roles and Responsibilities was felt to be too unclear and should be deleted.
- o Consideration would be given to refining the wording of the Policy to make it more positive.

Resolved:

That the Committee –

- (1) Note the need for the development of robust risk management arrangements.
- (2) Endorse the draft Risk Management of Policy attached to the report at Appendix A subject to the amendments suggested during the discussion.
- (3) Recommend to Cabinet that they approve the draft policy.

7. Business Continuity Management

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which described the progress made to date with establishing a business continuity project and reported on progress and future actions. It outlined the need for a business continuity management policy to be agreed to support the project.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- o A Members seminar would be held in April.
- o The commitments referred to in the report would be delivered throughout the coming year.
- o There was a need to make it clear that the policy extended to partnerships.

Resolved:

That the Committee

- (1) Note the need for the development of robust business continuity management arrangements.
- (2) Note the approach adopted for the development of a business continuity management framework.
- (3) Note the priority services identified for which plans will be developed by 30 June 2007.
- (4) Endorse the draft Business Continuity Management Policy attached Appendix A to the report subject to an amendment to make it clear that the policy extended to partnerships.
- (5) Recommend to Cabinet that they approve the draft policy as amended.

8. Dates for future meetings

Resolved:

That meetings of the Committee be held on:

- 10.00 a.m. Monday 4 June 2007
- 10:00 a.m. Monday 24 September 2007
- 10:00 a.m. Monday 19 November 2007
- 10:00 a.m. Wednesday 20 February 2008

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Report Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

Resolved:

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the item mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in paragraphs 2 and 7 of the Local Government Act 1972.

11. Exempt Minute of the meeting held on 22 November 2006

Resolved:

That the exempt minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on the 22 November 2006 be approved as a correct record and the minutes be signed by the Chair.

12. Internal Audit Report

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which summarised internal audit work carried out in the quarter ended 31 December 2006.

Following introductory comments from Garry Rollason, Audit and Risk Manager, members discussed several aspects of the report and made the following points:

- o The turn round time for agreeing draft reports had improved considerably.
- o Following each audit an action plan is agreed to strengthen practices.
- o With regard to changes in care providers, the decommissioning of unsatisfactory services was often unwelcome by users.

Resolved:

That the results of internal audit work in the period and the revised audit plan for 2006/7 be noted and that the Committee be kept informed of any significant developments.

13. Contract Standing Orders Audit 2006/07

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development.

The report set out the audit findings of the 2006/07 contract standing orders compliance audit and asked the Audit and Standards Committee whether any further actions are required.

The following points were made:

- o With regard to the awareness of Contract Standing Orders for School and the Procurement Code of Practice in schools, there were several channels for communicating information to schools, head teachers and Governors.
- o Consideration should be given to promoting and giving awards for best practice amongst schools etc. A report was requested for a future meeting.

Resolved:

That the Audit and Standards Committee endorse the Audit findings set out in the report and requested that:

- each strategic director review their scheme of delegation and designate one officer to be contracts co-ordinator for their directorate.
- one scheme of arrangements for minor contracts should be developed to cover the entire authority.

- each directorate implement a systematic process to ensure relevant staff attend effective procurement training.

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Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 12.02 p.m.