

Audit and Standards Committee

Agenda

24th February 2009

The Audit and Standards Committee will meet at the **SHIRE HALL, WARWICK** on **24th February 2009 at 10:00 a.m.**

The agenda will be: -

1. General

(1) **Apologies for absence**

(2) **Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

Members are reminded that they should declare the existence and nature of their personal interests at the commencement of the relevant item (or as soon as the interest becomes apparent). If that interest is a prejudicial interest the Member must withdraw from the room unless one of the exceptions applies.

(3) **Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 18th November 2008 and matters arising.**

STANDARDS ITEMS

2. **Standards Board for England – Bulletin No. No 41**

Report of the Strategic Director Performance and Development.

This report encloses the latest issue of the Standards Board Bulletin No. 41

Recommendation

That the Committee notes the latest Standards Board Bulletin

For further information please contact John Wright, Committee Manager, Tel: 01926 412320 e-mail johnwright@warwickshire.gov.uk.

3. Mediation -Advice for Elected Members

Report of the Strategic Director Performance and Development

This report sets out advice and guidance for elected members who may be asked as community representatives to become involved in mediation.

Recommendation

That the Committee considers and comments on the content of the proposed report.

For further information please contact Jane Pollard, Corporate Legal Services Manager Tel: 01926 412565 email janepollard@warwickshire.gov.uk

4. Annual Report Of The Committee

Report of the Strategic Director Performance and Development

This reports seeks advice from the Committee on the content of their annual report. A draft report is attached for comment.

Recommendation

That the Committee approves the proposed guidance (with/without amendment)

For further information please contact Jane Pollard, Corporate Legal Services Manager Tel: 01926 412565 email janepollard@warwickshire.gov.uk

AUDIT ITEMS

5. Triennial Review of Internal Audit.

Report of the Strategic Director Performance And Development

This report summarises the outcome of the recent Audit Commission review of Internal Audit.

Recommendation

That the contents of the Audit Commission report are considered by the Committee

For further information please contact Greta Needham, Head of Law and Governance Tel: 01926 412319 Email greatneedham@warwickshire.gov.uk
Garry Rollason, Audit and Risk Manager Tel: 01926 412679 Email garryrollason@warwickshire.gov.uk

6. Contract Standing Orders 2008

Report of the Strategic Director Performance And Development

This report outlines the findings of the 2008/9 contract standing orders compliance audit.

Recommendation

That the Audit and Standards Committee considers the audit findings set out in this report and asks each Directorate to prepare an action plan to improve its compliance with Contract Standing Orders in line with the improvements identified in this report

For further information please contact Greta Needham, Head of Law and Governance Tel: 01926 412319 Email greatneedham@warwickshire.gov.uk
Garry Rollason, Audit and Risk Manager Tel: 01926 412679 Email garryrollason@warwickshire.gov.uk

7. Contract Standing Orders for Schools

Report of the Strategic Director Children, Young People & Families

This is a progress report that outlines the key developments since the launch of the New Contract Standing Orders for Schools (1st September 2008) and suggests a way forward to continue supporting schools in their procurement and contracting decisions..

Recommendation

That the Audit and Standards Committee acknowledges the progress made to date and endorses the proposals for the way forward.

For further information please contact Dharmista Harkisan-Hall Children's Partnership Manager Tel: 01926 742348 Email dharmistaharkisan-hall@warwickshire.gov.uk or Paul Fairweather Solicitor Tel: 01926 412921 paulfairweather@warwickshire.gov.uk

8. 2007/08 Use of Resources Assessment

Report of the Strategic Director Resources

This report includes the Audit Commission's 2007/08 Use of Resources assessment. Overall the Council has been assessed at Level 4

Recommendation

That the Committee notes the Audit Commission's 2007/08 Use of Resources Assessment

For further information please contact Oliver Winters, Head of Finance Tel:
01926 412441

9. Data Quality Audit report

Report of the Strategic Director Performance And Development

This report provides the Committee with a Data Quality Audit Summary report and action plan, resulting from an audit carried out by the Audit Commission in September - October 2008

Recommendation

The Audit and Standards Committee is recommended to:

- Note the findings in the Data Quality Report
- Approve the response to the recommendations made by the Audit Commission

For further information please contact Tricia Morrison, Corporate Planning and Performance Manager, Tel: 01926 736319 Email triciamorrison@warwickshire.gov.uk
Elizabeth Abbott, Performance and Improvement Officer Tel: 01926 412026 Email elizabethabbott@warwickshire.gov.uk

10. Audit and Standards Work Programme

Report of the Strategic Director Performance and Development.

This report encloses the latest work programme for the Committee

Recommendation

That the Committee consider the latest work programme for the Committee

For further information please contact John Wright, Committee Manager, Tel: 01926 412320 e-mail johnwright@warwickshire.gov.uk.

11. Any Other Business

Which the Chair decides is urgent.

12. Future Meeting Dates

To note future meeting dates to be held in Shire Hall at 10:00 a.m. as follows -
28 May 2009
21 September 2009.
23 November 2009
22 February 2010

13. Report Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

To consider passing the following resolution:

‘That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for item 8 below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1,2, and 7 of the Local Government Act 1972’.

(NB. Copies of extracts describing exempt information are available in Warwickshire Libraries, the County Council Handbook and the Access to Information Register held in my office).

14. Internal Audit Report

Report of the Strategic Director Performance and Development

This report summarises internal audit work carried out in the period 1 October 2008 to 31 December 2008

Recommendation

That the results of internal audit work in the period 1 October 2008 to 31 December 2008 be noted

For further information please contact Greta Needham Head of Law and Governance, Tel: 01926 412319 Email gretaneedham@warwickshire.gov.uk or Garry Rollason Audit and Risk Manager Tel: 01926 412679 garryrollason@warwickshire.gov.uk

Jim Graham
Chief Executive

Shire Hall,
Warwick
February 2009

Membership

Councillors Sarah Boad, Les Caborn, Mick Jones, Tim Naylor, Bob Stevens and John Vereker CBE.

Independent Members: John Bridgeman CBE, (Chair), Rob Jeanes, Mark Magowan and Bob Meacham OBE

If you have any questions about this agenda please contact John Wright, Committee Manager, Member Services, Performance and Development Directorate, Tel. 01926 412320 or e-mail johnwright@warwickshire.gov.uk

The **AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE** met at **WARWICK** on the **18th November 2008**.

Present: -

Independent Members

John Bridgeman CBE (Chair)
Rob Jeanes
Bob Meacham OBE

County Councillors

Sarah Boad
Les Caborn
Tim Naylor
John Vereker CBE

Officers

Reuben Bergman, Deputy Head of Human Resources
Greta Needham, Head of Law and Governance
Jane Pollard, Corporate Legal Services Manager.
Garry Rollason, Audit and Risk Manager,
John Wright, Committee Manager

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mick Jones and Bob Stevens, Mark Magowan and David Carter.

(2) Welcome to New Members

The Chair welcomed Rob Jeanes and Bob Meacham who had both recently been appointed as independent members of the Committee.

(3) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None

(4) Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 22 September 2008.

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2008 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

(5) Matters Arising.

(a) Future Items

The Committee noted the timetable of forthcoming items which will be considered by the Committee and requested it be added to the minutes of the meeting.

(b) Minute 4 (b) Investigation under the Member Code of Conduct

The Committee noted Councillor Kanwardeep Singh had undertaken the training required by the Committee.

(c) Minute 4 (d) Contract Standing Orders for Schools

The Committee considered the steps being taken to ensure that schools engage with the requirements of the revised Standing Orders and agreed that a further report be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

2. Standards Board for England – Case Review 2008 Digest

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development on the content of the Standards Board Case Review 2008 Digest.

Resolved that the content of the Standards Board Case Review 2008 Digest be noted.

3. Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members and Employees – A consultation

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development on consultation from the government entitled “Communities in control: Real people, real power: Codes of conduct for local authority members and employees – A consultation paper”. The consultation paper invited views on proposals for revising the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 and the Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001. It also sought views on the proposed introduction of a model code of conduct for local government employees.

The Committee made the following points in relation to the proposals relating to the code relating to councillors

- Consultation question 1 The separation of the official capacity and private life was welcomed
- Consultation question 4 The consultation proposed that a breach would occur if an offence was committed that would be a criminal offence if committed in this country. Members welcomed the proposal but expressed concern that standards of proof may be lower in some countries which could result in convictions that would be harder to achieve in this country.

- Consultation question 5 Concern was expressed that ethical investigations should not be delayed until the completion of the criminal process as in some cases this could take many years. Members considered that Councils should have the discretion to decide whether or not to carry out an investigation on a case by case basis.
- Consultation question 11 The definition of criminal offence should be expanded to include being issued with a caution.
- The proposed duty to abide by the law was unnecessary and bureaucratic as everyone was required to abide by the law

The Committee considered the proposal to create a code of conduct for officers and made the following points:

- The definition of which officers the code should apply to was too vague
- A number of professions already had their own code of conduct and the introduction of a new code could lead to duplication or confusion between the requirements of the differing codes. If a code was to be introduced it would need to unify all the existing codes of conduct.
- The issues likely to be covered by an employee code of conduct could already be addressed under an employees contract of employment
- The Committee did not feel that the case for the introduction of an employee code of conduct had been met.

Resolved that the Cabinet be informed of the views of the Committee on the consultation document.

4. Local Assessment Procedure

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development on the process to be adopted in the handling of complaints under the member code of conduct and to ensure there was clarity over the process and expectations around Assessment and Review Sub-Committees.

Resolved that the local assessment procedure, as detailed in the appendix to the report submitted, be approved.

AUDIT ITEMS

5. Health and Safety Annual Report

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development on the annual health and safety report for 2007/08. The report detailed the specific arrangements for the management of health and safety both corporately and within the six directorates, a summary of developments over the last year, performance against key targets over the year and key priorities for 2008/2009. It was noted that the report would be considered by the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January.

Members made the following comments

- The report should include an indication of the severity of accidents and if different the severity of accidents in schools
- The report listed the number accidents per directorate but needed to show that number in relation to the number of staff in each directorate

- Concern was expressed that some directorates had a low number of officers that were competent to deal with health and safety issues but acknowledged that some training was planned
- The performance targets set out in appendix B of the report should be reviewed to see if they needed to be raised
- The report should detail the number of claims against the Council for health and safety issues and the amounts of compensation that had been paid out (distinguishing between employees and third parties if possible)
- Bench marking information.

Resolved that

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the comments made by the Committee be addressed in the report submitted to the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
- (3) a further report be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee

6. Corporate Governance Action Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development on the progress made both corporately and by individual Directorates in response to the 2007 Corporate Governance audit. Members were assured that progress was being made against all the targets set out in the report. The Action Plan was updated quarterly and would next be reported to the Cabinet in February 2009. Members were keen to ensure that the necessary actions were taken as failure to do so would detrimentally effect the outcome of the next corporate governance audit.

Resolved that the progress being made both corporately and by Directorates in response to the 2007 Corporate Governance audit be noted.

7. Update of Case File Recording

The Committee considered a report on the progress made within Adult Social Care in the area of case recording. The report detailed the progress that had been made since May. Of the six targets three had been exceeded, one had been met and two were slightly below the target.

Members discussed whether the targets which were currently set at 90% should be raised as there was concern that the 10% of cases not covered by the target could mean that some assessments could be missed. Consideration was given as to whether the target should be increased to 100%. The Committee was informed that the performance against the target could be affected by the timing of the audit of each case file. If a case file had recently been opened the case may not have progressed far enough for all the activities covered by the targets to have taken place which would then show that the targets had not been achieved. Members felt that it was not appropriate for the Audit and Standards committee to review the targets and suggested that it was a matter for the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members were also concerned that concentration by officers on paperwork would be carried out at the expense of spending time with clients but were

reminded that use of laptops and tablets meant that files could be updated more easily and efficiently.

The Committee was informed that, in comparison to many other authorities, Warwickshire was far more proactive in its approach to case file management

Resolved that

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to review the performance targets for case file recording;
- (3) a further report be submitted to this Committee in twelve months time.

8. Any Other Business

Councillor Boad reported on her recent attendance at the Standards Board for England annual conference She stated that she had found the event very informative and recommended that other members of the Committee should attend in future.

9. Dates of Future meetings

24 February 2009
8 June 2009

10. Report Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

Resolved that members of the public be excluded from the meeting for item 11 and below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1,2 and 7 of the Local Government Act 1972.

11. Internal Audit Report for the Period 1 April 2008 to 30 September 2008.

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which summarised on the results of internal audit work during the period 1 April 2008 to 30 September 2008.

The Committee reviewed the results of the 24 audits which had been completed and were concerned at the audit of Etone Community School which had shown there was no assurance provided by the controls in place. The committee were informed of the reasons why a lack of financial management had developed at the school and the steps which had been put in place since the audit to rectify the situation. The Committee was informed that all recommendations due to be implemented had been actioned.

The Committee also considered the HR Service centre and were informed that a number of problems had been experienced when the centre was created in integrating the systems of the Directorates. The audit had identified a number of issues which needed to be resolved. Significant progress had been made but much remained to be done in terms of introducing robust and consistent processes. The Committee was concerned that the comments and recommendations of the internal audit should be taken on board by the end of

March 2009 as an external audit was due to take place in early 2009 and it would be important to avoid further negative comments on the service.

Members noted that the post of “Warwickshire’s Project Management Approach Officer” had yet to be filled. Members requested an assurance at the next meeting of the Committee that the post had been filled and also requested details of the priority tasks of the post holder.

The Committee was informed that there were no further areas of concern to the audit team.

Resolved that

- (1) the report be noted:
- (2) a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee of the post of “Warwickshire’s Project Management Approach Officer”;

.....
Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 11:40 p.m.

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Audit And Standards Committee**

Date of Committee **24 February 2009**

Report Title **Standards Board For England – Bulletin
No.41**

Summary The report encloses the latest issue of the Standards
Board Bulletin

**For further information
please contact:** John Wright
Committee Manager
Tel: 01926 412320
johnwright@warwickshire.gov.uk

**Would the recommended
decision be contrary to the
Budget and Policy
Framework?** No.

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s) N/A
- Other Elected Members
- Cabinet Member
- Chief Executive
- Legal David Carter and Greta Needham
- Finance
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Agenda No 2

Audit And Standards Committee – 24 February 2009.

Standards Board For England - Bulletin No.41

Report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development

Recommendation

That the Committee notes the contents of the latest Standards Board Bulletins.

1. Introduction

This report attaches the latest Standards Board Bulletin No. 41 published in December 2008.

2. Newsletter highlights.

2. 1 Newsletter No 41 highlights include:

- Consultation on proposals for changes to the Code
- New regulations laid before Parliament
- Annual Assembly materials online
- Introducing the annual return
- Feedback on adjourning local assessment decisions
- References to the Adjudication Panel for England by a standards committee
- Review of online monitoring system
- Six councils achieve top standards
- Governance and partnerships – work with Manchester City Council
- Complaints about standards committees: Role of the Local Government Ombudsmen
- NALC 'Stepping Stones' regional conferences

DAVID CARTER
Strategic Director of Performance and Development
Shire Hall Warwick
10th February 2009

Contents

Page 2

Consultation on proposals for changes to the Code

New regulations laid before Parliament

Page 3

What's the alternative?

Page 4

Annual Assembly materials online

Introducing the annual return

Page 5

Feedback on adjourning local assessment decisions

References to the Adjudication Panel for England by a standards committee

Page 6

Review of online monitoring system

Six councils achieve top standards

Page 7

Governance and partnerships – work with Manchester City Council

Page 8

Complaints about standards committees: Role of the Local Government Ombudsmen

NALC 'Stepping Stones' regional conferences

Contact

Enquiries line: 0845 078 8181

Minicom: 0161 817 5449

www.standardsboard.gov.uk

email: bulletin@standardsboard.gov.uk



Welcome to Issue 41 of the *Bulletin*.

The local government ethical framework has changed a great deal this year.

The standards agenda is now successfully embedded at the local level, with standards committees taking responsibility for the initial assessment of Code of Conduct complaints. Local case handling is in place for all complaints except for those the Standards Board has taken back in the public interest. Your commitment and hard work has ensured that the transition to the locally-based system has been smooth and successful.

In this, our final *Bulletin* of the year, we look back – with a review of the Standards Board's online monitoring system, and feedback from the Seventh Annual Assembly of Standards Committees. And we reveal the high performing authorities shortlisted for the Standards and Ethics category at the Local Government Chronicle Awards 2009.

We also look forward – at the new authority annual return that forms part of the Standards Board's online monitoring system, and to the forthcoming amendments to the Code currently under consultation by Communities and Local Government. In addition, we examine the work on governance and partnerships that the Standards Board is undertaking to help us provide guidance to authorities on ensuring high standards of conduct in partnerships.

Other articles in this *Bulletin* address some key issues arising from the first few months of local case handling. These include a summary of the submissions received in response to *Bulletin 40's* request for views on adjourning local assessment decisions.

Finally, I wish you all the very best for 2009.



Glenys Stacey
Chief Executive

Consultation on proposals for changes to the Code

Communities and Local Government (CLG) launched a Code consultation in October 2008. The consultation is on CLG proposals for changes to the Code of Conduct for members and the introduction of a model code for local government employees.

In the 2006 ruling in *Livingstone v Adjudication Panel for England*, the High Court decided that Section 52 of the Local Government Act 2000 required members to comply with the Code in their official capacity only, and that it could not govern the private conduct of members.

In issuing his judgement in the *Livingstone* case, Collins J invited Parliament to be explicit about whether it wanted private conduct to be covered by the members' code. Parliament took this opportunity and passed the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The 2007 Act amended the 2000 Act to allow for the application of the members' Code to cover some conduct in a private capacity, where this has led to a criminal conviction.

The Standards Board for England supports CLG proposals for the new Code for members to cover the conduct of members in their non-official capacity, where that conduct would be a criminal offence. It is proposed that a 'criminal offence' shall be defined as any criminal offence which has led to a conviction in a criminal court, but for which the member does not have the option of paying a fixed penalty notice.

We have also made a number of suggestions for changes to the drafting of the Code, which we believe will make it easier to interpret and apply.

The Standards Board has long advocated the introduction of a standardised national officers' code, and supports CLG's proposals to do so.

The proposed model code is likely to operate a 'two tier' approach. Broadly speaking, the first tier would apply to all local government officers, and would be similar to the general obligations that members have under part one of the current members' Code. The second tier, which would include obligations to register and declare interests, would either apply to officers who are delegated to discharge functions on behalf of the authority or those in politically restricted roles.

CLG proposes that any code for officers should extend to officers of parish councils. We strongly believe that the code should be extended to employees of parish councils.

We recognise that this may be seen as overly bureaucratic for small parishes. However, they are a key component of local democracy and some of the more difficult cases that the Standards Board has dealt with in the past have involved issues with the clerk's conduct.

The consultation document can be found at www.communities.gov.uk. Anyone wishing to respond to the consultation – and we would urge you to do so – must respond by 24 December 2008. A copy of our response will be available on our website once it has been submitted.

New regulations laid before Parliament

On 18 November 2008, the Case Tribunals (England) Regulations 2008 were laid before Parliament. These complement the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 and make provision about the sanctions available to a case tribunal of the Adjudication Panel for England. They will come into force on 12 December 2008.

In particular, these regulations ensure that from 12 December, case tribunals will have the power to censure a member, require them to apologise, attend training, or enter into a process of

conciliation. These sanctions are currently available only to councils' standards committees. Making these sanctions available to case tribunals will allow them to deal proportionately with cases that are referred to them, for example, because they are seen as very serious, but which the tribunals conclude are not so serious. It will also enable tribunals to deal appropriately with cases referred to them because a standards committee is conflicted out.

The regulations also make provision about certain administrative procedures to be followed in relation to cases before the Adjudication Panel and its case tribunals.

The regulations are available from the website of the Office of Public Sector Information, at: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk>.

The government intends to complete its reform of the standards framework in January 2009 by making further regulations following consultation, which will allow councils to establish joint standards committees. These regulations will also enable the Standards Board to suspend a standards committee's powers to assess Code of Conduct allegations, in certain circumstances where we consider this to be in the public interest. They will also revise the existing dispensation regulations.

What's the alternative?

Delegates were given advice on how to use alternative action appropriately at this year's Annual Assembly of Standards Committees, held in Birmingham.

The **Alternative Action Masterclass** considered the advantages of using alternative action when appropriate and also discussed its potential challenges.

Referral to a monitoring officer for alternative action (or other action) is an option open to an

assessment sub-committee when considering a new complaint or complaints – though it must consult its monitoring officer before doing this. Alternative action is a useful tool in specific circumstances where the allegations being made may be symptomatic of systemic problems within the council, which are more significant than the allegations in themselves.

In such cases, the assessment sub-committee needs to be satisfied that even if the specific allegation had occurred as alleged, it would not be in the public interest to investigate with a view to sanctioning. The assessment sub-committee must also be satisfied that other action could assist the proper functioning of the council. If alternative action is used, there is no investigation, no findings of fact and consequently there should be no conclusions drawn about whether members have complied with the Code of Conduct.

Delegates at the Annual Assembly were given examples of situations where alternative action might be appropriate. These included where there is evidence of poor understanding of the Code. They also included situations where there has been a breakdown of relationships within a council to such an extent that it becomes difficult to conduct the business of the council.

Speakers mentioned that if the assessment sub-committee decides on alternative action, then all involved in the process will need to understand that the purpose of alternative action is not to find out whether the member breached the Code. It is not appropriate for the assessment sub-committee to suggest an apology as a satisfactory form of alternative action. This implies that there has been a breach of the Code without there having been an investigation. Rather, the decision is made as an alternative to investigation. In addition, the purpose of using alternative action should be made clear, as should the time when the action is concluded.

Standards committees were told that once alternative action is initiated, they cannot go back and ask the monitoring officer to conduct an investigation. Furthermore, it should be seen as a way of moving forward constructively, rather than reiterating issues that have caused conflicts in the past.

Speakers advised delegates of the potential limitations of using alternative action – especially that it should not be seen as a ‘quick fix’. It is not always a cheaper substitute for investigation and requires resources for training, mediation and other steps that could be carried out.

During a Q&A session, perceived disadvantages of alternative action were highlighted. These include the feeling among those involved that their issues may have been “swept under the carpet”.

For more information on alternative action, please refer to our *Local Assessment of Complaints* and *Local investigations and Other Action guidance*, which are available on our website.

Annual Assembly materials online

More than 800 delegates attended the Standards Board’s Seventh Annual Assembly of Standards Committees. Delegate feedback has been extremely positive.

The presentations and handouts from the event are available from www.annualassembly.co.uk. We are also developing a web version of the materials from the popular **Planning Ahead** session, which will be available on our website from December.

The Eighth Annual Assembly will be held on 12 and 13 October 2009 and we are currently establishing the steering committee for the event. The committee will help us to develop ideas for session content and generate examples of best practice to share with delegates.

Introducing the annual return

The Standards Board for England will be collecting information from standards committees on their activities and on their arrangements for supporting ethical conduct each year, starting in April 2009.

This information will enable us to drive up the performance of standards committees and of ethical conduct generally by identifying and then sharing notable practice. We will also be able to identify and offer support to those authorities experiencing problems.

The annual return will complement the quarterly return. Maintaining an ethical environment not only requires processes and protocols, such as codes of ethics, but also a culture that supports them. Therefore, while the quarterly return for the most part focuses on case handling, the annual return will collect information that will allow us to understand the culture and wider ethical governance arrangements in authorities.

As well as drawing on existing research, we have also been consulting with several groups of monitoring officers and chairs of standards committees for their thoughts on what information we should request.

We are now developing the specific questions that will make up the annual return. In the meantime, we will be undertaking further consultation and piloting to ensure that we get these questions right.

For further information about the annual return, please contact Hannah Pearson, Research and Policy Adviser: **0161 817 5417** or email hannah.pearson@standardsboard.gov.uk.

Feedback on adjourning local assessment decisions

In *Bulletin 40* we produced an article about adjourning local assessment decisions to seek cooperation with other action from the subject member. We invited your views on what you think should constitute the most appropriate practice. A total of 29 authorities responded to this article. We would like to thank those who participated.

Of the responses received, 14 were strongly against adjournment and eight were in favour. In addition, three authorities felt that the alternative suggested in the article would be preferable. The alternative suggested was that when the standards committee sends the case for investigation, it lets the monitoring officer know that it might not consider the case to be as serious, if the member is willing to comply with other action. This would mean that if the member indicated they would comply with other action, then the monitoring officer should feel free to ask that the case be returned to the standards committee.

The remaining four responses expressed the view that either adjournment of the assessment decision or this alternative approach would be acceptable.

Feedback from the responses received indicated that the concerns stated in the article about adjourning a local assessment decision far outweighed the advantages. For those against adjournment, the main concerns were:

- There is a danger that contacting the subject member before a decision has been made could ultimately suggest that the member has breached the Code, without there being a finding of fact.
- A member who refuses to engage with proposed alternative action could undermine confidence in the standards committee and public perceptions of justice.

- Adjournment would risk not meeting the 20 working day target for decision.
- Significant costs could be involved even if the matter was relatively trivial.

Those in favour of adjourning before making a decision gave the following reasons:

- The member may be more likely to cooperate if they were made aware of the options available.
- The standards committee would be more confident when making a decision in the knowledge that the member would/would not engage in other action.
- Other action allows the monitoring officer to seek resolution locally without a formal investigation or public hearing and may therefore prove more cost effective. Adjourning an assessment decision to seek cooperation from the subject member may increase the chances of other action succeeding.

The Standards Board is very grateful to everyone who responded. We intend to issue further guidance on other action in 2009, incorporating the issue of adjournment.

References to the Adjudication Panel for England by a standards committee

The President of the Adjudication Panel for England has recently issued guidance on the circumstances in which the Adjudication Panel would consider accepting a reference from a standards committee.

This guidance is now available on the Adjudication Panel's website and can be downloaded from the 'Guidance and Procedures' section at www.adjudicationpanel.co.uk.

Review of online monitoring system

In August 2008, we conducted a review of the Standards Board's online monitoring system. This formed part of a programme of work to assess how well our new systems are working.

We conducted telephone interviews with a random sample of monitoring officers or those nominated by the monitoring officers to make the online submission. A total of 24 out of a potential 50 interviews were successfully completed. Thank you to all who participated.

As this was the first time that monitoring officers or nominated staff were asked to submit an online return, we were expecting some 'teething problems'. What we actually found was that the majority of comments received were positive. The simplicity of the form was valued, with the majority experiencing minimal or no difficulty in making their online submission. This was confirmed with 98% of authorities submitting their return on time.

A large majority (83%) of monitoring officers or nominated staff interviewed expressed the view that the system is working effectively. We asked interviewees if they had contacted the Standards Board for assistance with the completion of the online form. A proportion of those interviewed (25%) had contacted the Standards Board for assistance. We invited those that had made contact to rate the response received in terms of speed, politeness, helpfulness and clarity of advice provided. All respondents rated the response for all categories as very good.

Respondents were also asked how the Standards Board can improve the support we provide. We received some useful suggestions – such as having a confirmation receipt upon completion of the submission and receiving a reminder when the submission is due. We were also interested in finding out about any technical issues that you may have experienced and were

glad to hear that there were only minor technical problems.

We are now working to make improvements. The review does not end here and we will continue to carry out a review following the end of each quarter. We hope that this will ensure that we quickly pick up any problems you may be experiencing. We also look forward to speaking to some of you as part of the review of the second quarter of online monitoring.

If you have any questions about this review or future reviews of the system please contact Cara Afzal, Deputy Research and Monitoring Manager: **0161 817 5414** or email cara.afzal@standardsboard.gov.uk.

Six councils achieve top standards

The following local authorities are all in with a chance of winning the Standards Board-sponsored Standards and Ethics category at the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards 2009:

- Ceredigion County Council
- Leeds City Council
- Lincolnshire County Council
- Newark & Sherwood District Council
- Newcastle City Council
- Rossendale Borough Council

The authorities were shortlisted, from a total of 22 entries, for their dynamic approach to improving and promoting ethical standards among members while boosting public confidence in local democracy. The judges were Glenys Stacey, Chief Executive of the Standards Board, Nick Raynsford MP, and John Tizard, Director of the Centre for Public Service Partnerships at the University of Birmingham.

Dr Robert Chilton, Chair of the Standards Board, said:

“All the authorities shortlisted have been committed and innovative in achieving or maintaining high standards of member conduct. They’ve done this with methods like training, member support and partnership work, and promotional initiatives among councillors, officers and the public.

“The Standards Board is pleased to lend its support to this award and it was great to see such an encouraging response to the call for entrants. Following the changes in the standards system back in May, it’s clear that plenty of authorities have embraced the chance to take ownership of ethical standards, and have begun to work proactively to endorse and promote the standards framework as well as managing their own complaints and investigations.

“We hope that many other authorities will follow suit.”

The winner will be selected from the shortlist and announced at the LGC Awards at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London on 25 March 2009.

Governance and partnerships – work with Manchester City Council

The Standards Board for England is currently undertaking research on how to ensure that authority partners are working to high standards of behaviour. This will enable us to provide guidance to local authorities and their standards committees.

Partnership-working is a growing and important way of operating. It could present a risk to public confidence if individuals and bodies involved in decision-making are not operating to a consistent and agreed standard of conduct.

Previous research undertaken for the Standards Board by the University of Manchester (Greasley et al, *The Components of an ethical environment*,

Institute for Political and Economic Governance, University of Manchester, May 2006) highlighted the problems of organisations when they come to work together. The research found differences in organisational culture, openness and transparency, inconsistencies in the codes of conduct that partners work to and differences in how codes of conduct are enforced.

We firmly believe that citizens should both expect and experience high standards of behaviour and probity wherever decisions are taken, or resources allocated, that affect lives and communities. Working in partnership should not compromise this.

As a minimum, local authorities should agree some shared values and standards of conduct with their partners at the outset of any joint working. These may be different for each and every partnership.

Our partnerships project aims to encourage high standards in partnership working. This will be done by creating a level playing field based on commitment to a set of agreed values and a description of appropriate behaviour.

It will achieve this through producing a description of appropriate behaviour in partnership with Manchester City Council and in consultation with the council’s partner organisations in the region. The description will illustrate appropriate behaviour in day-to-day partnership working based on the Nolan Principles of Standards in Public Life, and the experiences and needs of Manchester City Council and its partner organisations.

We intend that the work and learning from this project will be used as a basis for providing guidance nationally.

For further information on the governance and partnerships project, please contact Hannah Pearson, Research and Policy Adviser: **0161 817 5417** or email hannah.pearson@standardsboard.gov.uk.

Complaints about standards committees: Role of the Local Government Ombudsmen

Standards committees are within the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsmen (LGO). Therefore it is possible to make a complaint to the LGO of maladministration causing injustice, as a result of some action or inaction by a standards committee or authority monitoring officer around the handling of a Code of Conduct complaint.

Parish councils are outside the LGO's jurisdiction. However, there is no jurisdictional bar to the LGO investigating the actions of a standards committee of a responsible authority regarding the committee's actions, which relate to a complaint about a parish council.

The LGO recognise that the Standards Board for England is the body established by statute to oversee member conduct. However, in some circumstances the LGO may wish to consider allegations of administrative fault where the complainant can claim to have suffered an injustice as a result of that fault.

A complaint to the LGO may only be made by, or on behalf of, a member of the public or a body other than a local authority or other public service body. A complainant must be able to claim a personal injustice. An elected member may only complain to the LGO about something which affects them personally as a member of the public. This can include actions of the authority's standards committee and officers carrying out functions in relation to the standards committee.

The Standards Board and the LGO have just signed a revised Memorandum of Understanding setting out our relevant jurisdictions and how we will work together effectively.

Further information about the work of the LGO is available at: www.lgo.org.uk.

NALC 'Stepping Stones' regional conferences

The Standards Board will be exhibiting at the National Association of Local Councils (NALC)'s Stepping Stones regional conferences which take place in spring 2009. The conferences aim to share good practice and provide a regional networking opportunity for councillors and officers in all tiers of local government. More information on our activity at these events will be available from our website soon.

The dates for the events are:

Wednesday 11 February

The Oak Tree Conference Centre, Coventry

Saturday 21 February

The Hospitium, York

Tuesday 10 March

The Council Chamber, Congress Centre, London

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Audit & Standards Committee**

Date of Committee **24 February 2009**

Report Title **Mediation -Advice for Elected Members**

Summary This report sets out advice and guidance for elected members who may be asked as community representatives to become involved in mediation.

For further information please contact: Jane Pollard
 Corporate Legal Services
 Manager
 Tel: 01926 412565
 janepollard@warwickshire.gov.uk

Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? No.

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s) N/A
- Other Elected Members
- Cabinet Member
- Chief Executive
- Legal Jane Pollard
- Finance
- Other Strategic Directors
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police

Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

Further consideration by this Committee

To Council

To Cabinet

To an O & S Committee

To an Area Committee

Further Consultation

Audit & Standards Committee - 24 February 2009.

Mediation -Advice for Elected Members

**Report of the Strategic Director of Performance and
Development**

Recommendation

That the Committee approves the proposed guidance (with/without amendment)

Introduction

The Assessment Sub-committee asked the Monitoring Officer to consider what advice should be given to elected members when asked to take on the role of mediator in disputes between constituents. This arose following the receipt of a complaint from a member of the public relating to the role of an elected member engaged as a mediator in a dispute between constituents.

Attached is a draft guidance note for elected members for the committee to consider.

DAVID CARTER
Strategic Director of
Performance and
Development

Shire Hall
Warwick

27 January 2009

MEDIATION – GUIDANCE NOTE

Elected members may from time to time be asked as the local councillor or community representative to act as a mediator in disputes involving constituents. Whilst elected members bring a wide variety of skills and experience into local government, they may or may not include the skills of an effective mediator. Mediation is a skilled undertaking. You should consider carefully the questions at the end of this note before agreeing to participate.

Trust underpins the mediation process. If the parties do not trust a mediator's integrity in terms of competence diligence, neutrality, independence, impartiality, fairness and the ability to respect confidences, mediation is unlikely to succeed.

What is Mediation?

Mediation is an effective way of resolving disputes without the need to go to court. It involves using an independent third party - a mediator - who helps both sides to come to an agreement. Mediation is a flexible process that can be used to settle disputes in a whole range of situations such as:

- consumer disputes
- contract disputes
- housing disputes
- neighbourhood disputes

What is the role of the mediator?

The role of the mediator is to help parties reach a solution to their problem and to arrive at an outcome that both parties are happy to accept.

The mediator remains neutral throughout the process. The focus of a mediation meeting is to reach a common sense settlement agreeable to both parties.

Mediation is a voluntary process and will only take place if both parties agree. It is a confidential process where the terms of discussion are not disclosed to anyone outside the mediation.

What happens in mediation? –A basic outline

After a referral is received, two mediators will visit each party concerned, separately, with a view to, wherever possible, getting the parties to agree to meet face-to-face, together with the mediators. The mediation session will take place in a neutral venue and the aim is for the parties to discuss the issues together in order to try to reach an agreement.

The mediators listen to the issues involved, however they remain impartial at all times.

The mediation process is a confidential one as long as the proceedings and content are within the limits of the law.

It is the mediators' role to help the parties concerned to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. This agreement can be written or verbal, however it is a 'good will' agreement and not legally binding.

The advantage of mediation is that it is a means of trying to resolve a dispute in a conciliatory way.

Mediation does not exclude other forms of action, should the need arise. If mediation is not successful, legal routes would still be available.

What should I as an elected Member consider?

Do I understand what the mediation process involves and what would be expected of me?

Do I know how to structure a mediation session? What skills and techniques would I need to help the parties find a solution?

Have I the time to undertake the mediation? Often by the time mediation is suggested the issue between the parties involved can be entrenched and to reach a solution may require a substantial investment of time.

Have I the right skills and experience to undertake the mediation?

Be honest with yourself. Remember that the people involved may be feeling upset, vulnerable, angry or distressed. You will need to be patient, objective and non-judgemental about other people's problems and situations. Mediation may involve a wide range of people from different cultures, age groups and backgrounds.

Do I need training before undertaking mediation or this particular mediation?

Remember no two mediations are alike and a variety of skills and techniques will be required depending on the individuals and the issue. If you wish to undertake a mediation role in your community you should consider undertaking some form of mediation training covering at least the following

- conflict management
- listening skills
- assertive communication
- the whole process of mediation

Specialist training may also be required for the more complex or entrenched issues. There are professional qualifications/ certifications which can be acquired.

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Audit & Standards Committee**

Date of Committee **24 February 2009**

Report Title **Annual Report of the Committee**

Summary This reports seeks advice from the Committee on the content of their annual report. A draft report is attached for comment

For further information please contact: Jane Pollard
 Corporate Legal Services
 Manager
 Tel: 01926 412565
 janepollard@warwickshire.gov.uk

Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? No.

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s) N/A
- Other Elected Members
- Cabinet Member
- Chief Executive
- Legal Jane Pollard
- Finance
- Other Strategic Directors
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police

Other Bodies/Individuals

Greta Needham

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

Further consideration by
this Committee

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To Council

.....

To Cabinet

.....

To an O & S Committee

.....

To an Area Committee

.....

Further Consultation

.....

Agenda No 4

Audit & Standards Committee - 24 February 2009.

Annual Report of the Committee

Report of the Strategic Director of Performance & Development

Recommendation

That the Committee considers and comments on the content of the proposed report

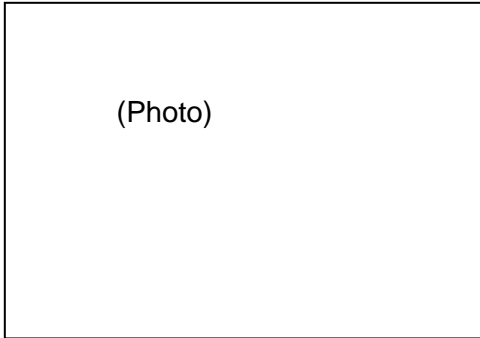
A draft annual report is attached. The Committee is asked to comment on the content of the report. Once the content has been agreed the report design will be finalised for onward submission to Council.

DAVID CARTER
Strategic Director of
Performance & Development

Shire Hall
Warwick

04 February 2009

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT & STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2008/09



I am pleased to present the third Annual Report of the Audit & Standards Committee of Warwickshire County Council. It covers the year 2008/2009.

We are pleased to welcome two additional independent members to the committee this year, Mr Robert Jeanes and Mr Robert Meacham OBE.

The Committee met five times in the course of the year in public session. In May 2008 the committee became responsible for dealing with complaints about members of the council. We had received training in February 2008 on our new responsibilities. In addition a refresher training session was arranged for all members of the Committee on 18 November 2008 on the revised code of conduct.

The Committee is kept informed of national developments related to the conduct regime through bulletins issued by the Standards Board for England.

The Council has a duty to ensure that it has adequate and effective risk management, control and governance arrangements and for the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of its activities. We have an exciting, key role to independently challenge and give assurance on these issues.

I am indebted to the members of the Committee, and officers of the County Council for their support and for their contribution in ensuring that our work remains effective and economical.

Signature

**John S Bridgeman CBE TD DL
Independent Chairman Standards Committee**

New Arrangements from May 2008

Any complaint about a member of the County Council under the code of conduct should be sent to the Monitoring Officer at the address below

The Monitoring Officer
Warwickshire County Council
PO Box 9
Shire Hall Warwick CV34 4RR
OR

By email to
monitoringofficer@warwickshire.gov.uk

Information about the process and complaint forms can be accessed through our website at
www.warwickshire.gov.uk

Did you know?

Evidence shows that frauds are usually committed by long serving members of staff who are trusted by the organisation, know the systems and controls well and are able to get around them. The Committee agreed a revised anti-fraud policy during the year which set out our zero tolerance approach to any form of financial irregularity. Employees are usually the first to notice when things are going wrong and can often provide the best source of information. A special fraud reporting hotline and e-mail address has been set up to allow staff to report possible irregularities: 01926 412052 tellusaboutfraud@warwickshire.gov.uk

THE AUDIT & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Audit & Standards Committee is composed of six county councillors and four independent members.

John Bridgeman CBE TD DL joined the Standards Committee and was elected its first independent Chairman in 2000. He is also Chairman of the Horseracing Regulatory Authority and the Standards Committee of the Warwickshire Police Authority. He is a Board Member and Pension Trustee of British Waterways, chairs its Fair Trading Committee and sits on the Audit Committee. He is also Visiting Professor in Management at Keele University and advises a number of organisations on ethics, governance, regulation and strategy. Formerly he was Managing Director of British Alcan Aluminium plc and a member of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission before serving for 5 years as Director General of Fair Trading

Mark Magowan is an independent member of the Committee. He lives in Warwick and is a Senior Auditor with the National Grid Transco. He has previous experience with H.M. Customs and Excise where his responsibilities included developing new tax and control frameworks with major companies.

Mr Robert Meacham OBE is a retired businessman who lives in Kenilworth. He is a governor of the Lady Katherine Leveson C of E Primary School and the Lady Katherine Leveson Foundation. He is also a charity trustee of the Norton Foundation. He holds the position of a lay manager with the Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Trust.

Mr Robert Jeanes is a retired Audit Manager of major bank who lives in Warwick. He was an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Bankers (ACIB) and a Practitioner of the Institute of Internal Auditors (PIA). He has been a lay member of the Warwickshire Schools Appeals Panel since 2002.

Councillor Sarah Boad is a member of the Liberal Democrat party and represents the Leamington North division on the Council. She is the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat group on the Council and Chair of Warwick Area Committee.

Councillor Tim Naylor is a member of the Labour party and represents the Leamington Willes division on the Council. He is the Deputy Leader of the Labour group on the Council and is a former Cabinet portfolio holder for Resources Management.

Councillor Les Caborn is a member of the Conservative party and represents the Bishops Tatchbrook division on the Council

Councillor Mick Jones is a member of the Labour party and represents the Nuneaton Galley Common division on the Council. He is the Chair of the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a former Cabinet portfolio holder for Young People, Lifelong Learning and Families.

Councillor John Vereker CBE is a member of the Conservative party and represents the Rugby Caldecott division on the Council. He is the Chair of Rugby Area Committee and a past Chair of the County Council

Councillor Bob Stevens is a member of the Conservative party and represents the Feldon division on the Council. He is the Deputy Leader of the County Council

REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE 2008/09

We have considered and advised on a number of issues throughout the year e.g.

- **Performance/ Monitoring reports**
 - Quarterly internal audit reports
 - External Annual Audit and Inspection Plan
 - Corporate Governance Action Plan
 - Statement of Accounts and Statement of Internal Control
 - External Auditors Annual Governance Report and Letter of Representation
 - Adult Social Care case recording
 - Data Quality Audit Report
 - Health and Safety Annual Report

- **Member development**
 - Agreed the new local assessment arrangements for complaints about members
 - Our new responsibility for the supervision of politically restricted posts
 - Guidance for members engaged in mediation
 - Received and considered regular bulletins from the Standards Board, Annual reports of the Adjudication Panel, Standards Board and the Case Digest 2008

- **Policy Matters**
 - Implications of proposed changes to the Members Code of Conduct and a proposal for a statutory Employee Code of Conduct
 - Review of Anti-fraud and Anti-corruption Policy
 - Review of Contract Standing Orders for Schools
 - Internal/External Audit Protocol
 - Revised Internal Audit Strategy

Complaints about Members

We have dealt with two referrals during the course of the year. One referral from the Standards Board where we found there had been a failure by a member to keep the register of interests up to date. We recommended training for the member in these circumstances.

A further case was referred to us under the new local assessment process. We did not consider the complaint warranted an investigation under the code of conduct and referred the matter to the monitoring officer for other action. As a result of this case we have also offered guidance to members who wish to engage in mediation between constituents

Who audits the auditors?

The Audit Commission regularly reviews the quality of internal audit work and checks compliance with professional standards. The results of the review have wide ranging implications for the Use of Resources judgement. The Committee considered the results of the latest review in February 2009. This review concluded that the internal audit service fully complies with the Code of Practice and provides a good service to the authority.

Local Assessment Criteria

We have adopted the following approach to the local assessment of complaints

- Is there prima facie evidence of a code breach?
- Would investigation serve any useful purpose?
- Would an alternative route to investigation provide a more effective resolution? Is there scope for mediation, brokering, apology etc?
- Is the case suitable for local investigation?

We will not normally refer complaints for investigation where they fall within one or more of the following categories

- we believe it to be malicious, relatively minor, or tit-for-tat
- the same, or substantially similar, complaint has already been the subject of an investigation or inquiry and there is nothing further to be gained by seeking the sanctions available to the standards committee or the Adjudication Panel
- the complaint concerns acts carried out in the member's private life, when they are not carrying out the work of the authority or have not misused their position as a member
- it appears that the complaint is really about dissatisfaction with a council decision
- there is not enough information currently available to justify a decision to refer the matter for investigation
- except in the most serious of cases, conduct which might have been a breach of the original Code but would not be considered to be a breach of the revised Code of Conduct adopted in May 2007

WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

New Developments/Legislation

- Advise on any changes to the member code of conduct and /or any development of an employee code of conduct
- To take up our new responsibilities in relation to politically restricted posts

Performance Monitoring

- Review audits of compliance with Contract and Financial Standing Orders
- Evaluate the annual internal audit report
- Commission a Corporate Governance Audit
- Consider the external auditors annual governance report
- Review the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement
- Evaluate the external and internal audit plan

Member Development

- Commission training as required for members in relation to the code of conduct and the new local assessment provision
- Advise on any general areas of concern relating to the operation of Code of Conduct and any implications arising from cases and the bulletins issued by the Standards Board

Update on the National Picture

To be completed

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee

Audit And Standards Committee

Date of Committee

24 February 2009

Report Title

Audit Commission – Triennial Review of Internal Audit

Summary

This report summarises the outcome of the recent Audit Commission review of Internal Audit.

For further information please contact:

Greta Needham
Head of Law and Governance
Tel: 01926 412319
greatneedham@warwickshire.gov.uk

Garry Rollason
Audit and Risk Manager
Tel: 01926 412679
garryrollason@warwickshire.gov.uk

Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?

No.

Background papers

None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-

Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s) Not applicable
- Other Elected Members
- Cabinet Member Cllr Timms
- Chief Executive
- Legal Jane Pollard
- Finance Dave Clarke
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police

Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

Further consideration by this Committee

To Council

To Cabinet

To an O & S Committee

To an Area Committee

Further Consultation

Agenda No 5

Audit and Standards Committee – 24 February 2009

Audit Commission – Triennial Review of Internal Audit

Joint Report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development

Recommendation

That the contents of the Audit Commission report are considered by the Committee.

- 1 The attached Audit Commission report outlines the results of a triennial review of the Council's internal audit service. This review has important implications as it influences the CPA Use of Resources judgement and the external auditor's VFM conclusion.
- 2 The results of the review are excellent, concluding that the service fully complies with the Cipfa Code and provides a good service to the Council.
- 3 A representative from the Commission will attend to present the report and answer any questions.
- 4 The Committee is asked to consider the report.

DAVID CARTER
Strategic Director of
Performance and
Development

Shire Hall
Warwick

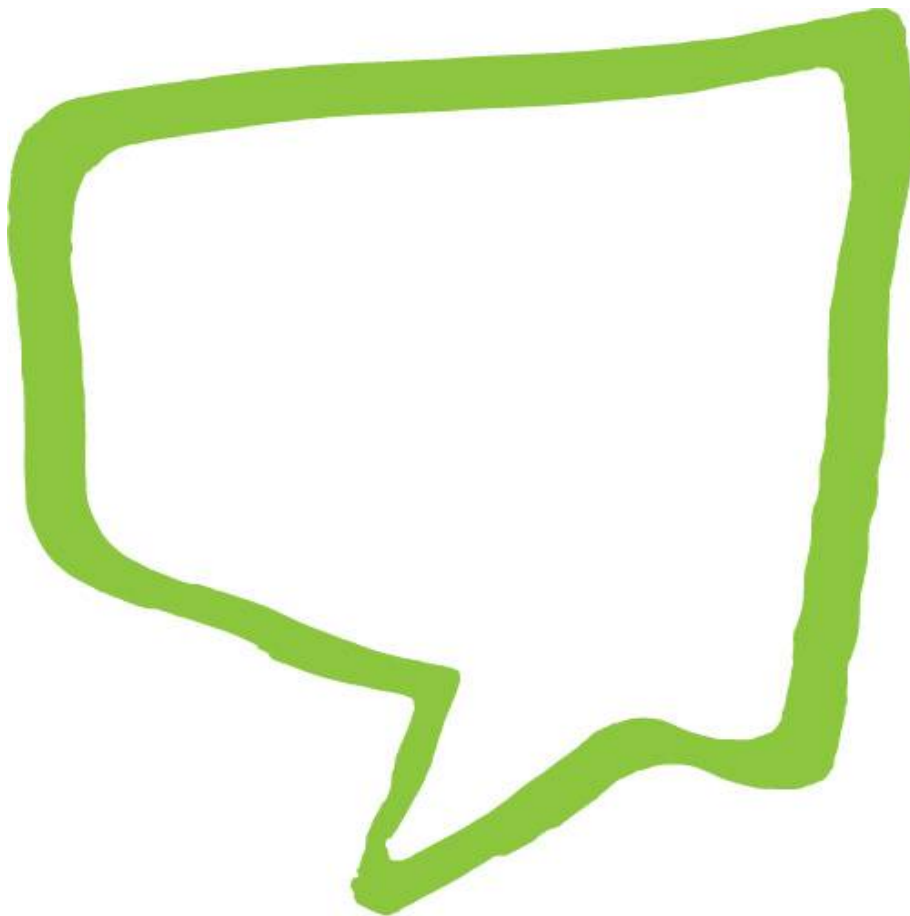
23 January 2009

Triennial Review of Internal Audit

Warwickshire County Council

Audit 2008/09

January 2009



Contents

Introduction	3
Scope	4
Audit approach	5
Main conclusions	6
Detailed findings	7

Status of our Reports

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to non-executive directors/members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any director/member or officer in their individual capacity; or
 - any third party.
-

Introduction

- 1 A strong and effective Internal Audit (IA) function is essential for maintaining a sound system of internal control and as such is required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2006.
- 2 Internal audit is defined by the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom 2006' ('the Code) as an assurance function that provides an independent and objective opinion to the organisation on the control environment, by evaluating its effectiveness in achieving the organisation's objective'. The code also sets out the requirements of how the function should operate.
- 3 International Statements of Auditing (ISAs) require external audit to integrate the work of Internal Audit into both the assessment of the council control environment as well as into audit findings and the approach to the audit of the financial statements. In order to be able to do this we must complete a review of all files that we are to rely on as well as a full review of the function against the Code. This report comments on that triennial review of the function.
- 4 The key purpose of the review is to assess the effectiveness of the internal audit section and whether it is possible for us to place reliance on the work that they perform.
- 5 There are three parts to the review.
 - We review Internal Audit to confirm that they comply with the requirements of the CIPFA Code and CIPFA Internal Audit Manual.
 - We review whether IA is effective as a management control.
 - We review (and seek to place reliance on) specific pieces of IA work, where that work covers areas relevant to our Code of Practice objectives. This is in accordance with ISA+610.
- 6 The results of the review have wide ranging implications for the audit plan, influencing our overall risk rating for the audit, our assessment of internal control, plus linking directly to both the Use of Resources judgement and our VFM conclusion. In addition, the inability of us to rely on the work of IA could have implications for the overall audit fee.

Scope

- 7 In 1990 the Auditing Practices Board (APB) adapted the CIPFA publication: 'Guidance for Internal Auditors' and issued an Auditing Guideline which sets down the principles upon which members of CCAB bodies engaged in IA should operate. More recently, this has been updated in 2000 and again in 2003 by the CIPFA Code of Practice for IA in local government in the United Kingdom. These principles and standards are the basis of our review of IA at Warwickshire County Council (WCC).
- 8 Consequently, our review covers the following key areas.
- Scope of Internal Audit
 - Independence
 - Ethics for Internal Auditors
 - Audit Committees
 - Relationships
 - Staffing, Training & CPD
 - Audit Strategy & Planning
 - Undertaking Audit Work
 - Due Professional Care
 - Reporting
 - Performance, Quality & Effectiveness

Audit approach

- 9 This work has been undertaken by discussion with the Audit & Risk Manager and a detailed review of Galileo and two IA files.

Main conclusions

- 10** IA is compliant with the CIPFA Code of Practice for IA in local government in the United Kingdom and delivers a good standard of service to WCC.
- 11** We are able to place reliance on the work of IA to support our Code of Practice objectives.
- 12** Many of the good practices contained in the CIPFA guidance are in place at the authority. The effectiveness of IA, as part of the overall control environment, provides assurance to the S151 officer that financial control is effective and reaffirms the reliance that we, as external auditors, can place on its work.
- 13** We have summarised our findings for each of the Code standards in the table overleaf.

Detailed findings

CIPFA standards

- 14 CIPFA has produced a Code of Practice for Internal Auditors; this sets out eleven professional standards for Internal Audit. All of the standards have been met in full as demonstrated by the table below.

Table 1 Assessment of Warwickshire County Council Internal Audit Section against the Code standards

Standard	Met - Yes/No/In part
1. Scope of Internal Audit	Yes
2. Independence	Yes
3. Ethics for Internal Auditors	Yes
4. Audit Committees	Yes
5. Relationships	Yes
6. Staffing, Training & CPD	Yes
7. Audit Strategy & Planning	Yes
8. Undertaking Audit Work	Yes
9. Due Professional Care	Yes
10. Reporting	Yes
11. Performance, Quality & Effectiveness	Yes

The Audit Commission

The Audit Commission is an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services to deliver better outcomes for everyone.

Our work across local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services means that we have a unique perspective. We promote value for money for taxpayers, auditing the £200 billion spent by 11,000 local public bodies.

As a force for improvement, we work in partnership to assess local public services and make practical recommendations for promoting a better quality of life for local people.

Copies of this report

If you require further copies of this report, or a copy in large print, in Braille, on tape, or in a language other than English, please call 0844 798 7070.

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For further information on the work of the Commission please contact:

Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

Tel: 0844 798 1212 Fax: 0844 798 2945 Textphone (minicom): 0844 798 2946

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Audit and Standards Committee**

Date of Committee **24 February 2009**

Report Title **Compliance with Contract Standing Orders**

Summary This report outlines the findings of the 2008/9 contract standing orders compliance audit.

For further information please contact: Greta Needham Head of Law and Governance
Tel: 01926 412319
greatneedham@warwickshire.gov.uk

Garry Rollason
Audit and Risk Manager
Tel: 01926 412679
garryrollason@warwickshire.gov.uk

Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? No.

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s) Not applicable
- Other Elected Members
- Cabinet Member Cllr Timms
- Chief Executive
- Legal Jane Pollard
- Finance Dave Clarke
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police

Other Bodies/Individuals

Paul White, County Procurement Manager

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

Further consideration by this Committee

To Council

To Cabinet

To an O & S Committee

To an Area Committee

Further Consultation

Audit and Standards Committee – 24 February 2009

Contract Standing Orders Compliance Audit 2008/09

**Report of the Strategic Director of Performance and
Development**

Recommendation

That the Audit and Standards Committee considers the audit findings set out in this report and asks each Directorate to prepare an action plan to improve its compliance with Contract Standing Orders in line with the improvements identified in this report

1 Background

1.1 Annually an audit of compliance with contract standing orders (CSOs) is undertaken. This year's audit concentrated on checking a sample of contracts to check Authority wide compliance with CSOs. This is the same approach as in 2007/8. A review of Schools CSOs will be completed in early 2009 and the outcome reported to this committee at its September 2009 meeting.

1.2 In September 2008, all Contract Co-ordinators within Directorates were advised that the annual audit of CSOs would be carried out between the end of September and November and that it would involve a detailed review of compliance. The audit involved meeting directorate contract co-ordinators to assess the arrangements they have to ensure compliance with CSOs and to check that action had been taken to address the findings of the previous audit. Following this a sample of contracts let were reviewed against key requirements of CSOs to assess compliance. In particular, the audit reviewed whether the following key arrangements were in place:

- Planning arrangements for contracting process;
- Options appraisal;
- Arrangements for advertising;
- Shortlisting process;
- Tender opening and evaluation processes;
- Compliance with the Procurement Code of practice;
- Contract award procedure; and
- Risk Management arrangements.

2. Outcomes

2.1 Upon completion of the directorate visits, a summary of findings from each directorate was sent to each Contract Co-ordinator for consideration. The responses received have been incorporated into this report. The principal common themes and issues emerging from the 2008/9 audit process are set out below:

- The Contract Management System (CMS) was not being fully kept up to date e.g. contracts were shown as still in draft but the tendering process had been completed. There was also evidence that contracts subject to an exemption had not been recorded. This is a recurring issue and is therefore disappointing.
- A number of issues arose in connection with tender evaluation and contract award. Formal reports, detailing the background to the decision of the award, were not completed for contracts in four of the directorates and in one directorate, there were contracts that remained unsigned after they had come into force.
- Documentary evidence supporting the tendering process was not always being retained, or signed off, by the officers letting contracts.
- Risk management issues arose in two of the directorates. Risk registers had not been completed for several contracts, where it would have been appropriate to ascertain and assess the risks to the Authority, of entering into agreements with third parties.
- There are still issues in relation to compliance with the Procurement Code of Practice, the main areas being that procurement plans are not being prepared / sent to the County Procurement Manager and suppliers' insurance cover had not been checked to ensure that it was appropriate for the needs of the Authority and that it was valid.

2.2 The committee will recall that revised CSOs that simplified the procurement process became effective from 1 April 2008. However, a number of contracts reviewed during this audit were originated under the old CSOs so the benefits of simplification have still to be fully realised.

2.3 Directorates have made good progress in implementing the issues raised in previous reviews. Training has now been completed across the council with approximately 250 staff being trained over the last two years. As a result the level of knowledge of CSOs has improved considerably. However, one directorate still needs to review the use of their operating procedures, to ensure that they are fully in line with

CSOs. In addition there are still two nominated Contract Co-ordinators within two directorates.

- 2.4 The delegated nature of procurement activity means that many managers will let complex contracts infrequently. This combined with the scale of contracting and the complexity of procurement processes means that some non-compliance is inevitable. However, we should not be complacent and directorates should continue to publicise both the requirements of CSOs and, more importantly, the need to seek professional advice during procurement exercises. Directorate contract co-ordinators, in conjunction with the procurement unit, have a key role to play in ensuring that managers are appropriately supported during procurement exercises.

3 The Way Forward

- 3.1 The responsibility across all directorates for ensuring compliance with CSOs rests with the Strategic Directors and the Chief Executive. Strategic Directors will continue to promote high standards through the contracting arrangements within their directorates and will ensure that the common themes identified above, and the specific issues identified within their particular directorates, are addressed as necessary.
- 3.2 The Strategic Director of Performance and Development will continue to make arrangements to monitor the compliance of directorates with CSOs and a further audit will be undertaken during 2009/10 and will be reported to this committee in due course.
- 3.3 The issues detailed in this report can only be addressed effectively by directorates. It is suggested that each directorate is asked to prepare an action plan to improve its compliance with Contract Standing Orders particularly for the areas of improvement identified in this report.
- 3.4 The Committee is asked to consider the content of this report and decide if further action is necessary.

DAVID CARTER
Strategic Director of
Performance and
Development

Shire Hall
Warwick

2 January 2009

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Audit and Standards Committee**
Date of Committee **24th February 2009**
Report Title **Update on the Implementation of the
New Contract Standing Orders for
Schools**

Summary This is a progress report that outlines the key developments since the launch of the New Contract Standing Orders for Schools (1st September 2008) and suggests a way forward to continue supporting schools in their procurement and contracting decisions.

For further information please contact:

Dharmista Harkisan-Hall Children's Partnership Manager Tel: 01926 742348 dharmistaharkisan-hall@warwickshire.gov.uk	Paul Fairweather Solicitor Tel: 01926 412921 paulfairweather@warwickshire.gov.uk
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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? [please identify relevant plan/budget provision] No

Background papers Audit and Standards Committee 18.11.08

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:

Details to be specified

Other Committees

Local Member(s) Not applicable

Other Elected Members CYP&F O&S Spokespersons for information:
Cllr John Burton
Cllr Richard Grant
Cllr John Whitehouse

Cabinet Member Cllr Izzi Seccombe

- Other Cabinet Members consulted
- Chief Executive
- Legal Paul Fairweather, Christine Williamson, Diane Nation – comments incorporated in the report
- Finance David Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources – no comments to make
- Other Strategic Directors David Carter, Strategic Director of Performance and Development – no comments to make
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION **YES**

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS: Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Audit and Standards Committee – 24th February 2009

Update on the Implementation of the New Contract Standing Orders for Schools

Report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families

Recommendation:

That the Audit and Standards Committee considers the progress made to date and endorses the proposals for the way forward.

1. Background

- 1.1 In April 2008 Contract Standing Orders for Schools (CSOfS) were reviewed by the County Council, amended on the basis of feedback received from schools and revised. The new CSOfS came into operation from 1st September 2008.
- 1.2 A summary paper of updates was submitted to this Committee on 18th November 2008. It outlined the list of documents communicated to schools, school governors and contracting staff.
- 1.3 This report provides further information about the communication and support to schools on CSOfS since July/August 2008.

2. New Contract Standing Orders for Schools

- 2.1 The new CSOfS has been in force since 1st September 2008. All the documents related to the new guidance are available via the websites for schools and the headteachers' handbook. (The headteachers' handbook is a mini website that schools can login securely. It provides information on statutory guidance, briefing circulars, professional training and links to local businesses).
- 2.2 The following key documents are available to download via the websites on the schools and learning webpages and the Warwickshire Education Services website (which is part of the traded support services offered to schools) (see legal service page);

- (a) New Schools CSOs – in force from 1st September 2008.
- (b) Main summary of changes document.
- (c) Procurement of new build/refurbishments flow chart.
- (d) Procurement of catering/cleaning grounds maintenance flow chart.
- (e) Procurement of equipment/goods flow chart.
- (f) TUPE guidance note.
- (g) Procurement guidance for staff.
- (h) Procurement guidance for governors and head teachers.

2.3 In addition to this, Multi-Agency Commissioning team within CYP&F Directorate and Legal Services are available to support and advise schools.

2.4 During July and August 2008 schools and governors were informed by means of a letter to schools and an article in the governors' monthly briefing newsletter about the new CSOfS coming into effect for 1st September 2008.

2.5 Since then the documents have been available on the websites with the plan to support this with a training package.

3. Training Package

3.1 Multi-Agency Commissioning and Legal Services have planned a series of half-day training workshops for all staff involved in contracting in schools from March 2009.

3.2 This has been informed by the feedback from some schools.

3.3 The presentation and training will cover the key elements and the main changes in the New Contract Standing Orders.

3.4 The training is targeted at all contracting staff, headteachers and governors who have a role and responsibility in contracting services and goods.

3.5 It will have a sustainable approach and build on the annual induction training programmes for new headteachers and governors.

4. Key Development

4.1 The DCSF have recruited National Schools Procurement Officers across the region to support schools to improve their procurement of goods/services for at least 2 to 3 years.

4.2 Debra Whittaker, who is the designated National Schools Procurement Officer for Warwickshire, has already established links with the Children, Young People and Families Directorate and has a 'hotdesk' available to use within the Multi-Agency Commissioning Team.

5. Way Forward

5.1 The feedback from the training in March 2009 should inform the sustainable approach in the near future.

- 5.2 The National Schools Procurement Officer will be working with the Children, Young People and Families Directorate to find synergies in supporting schools when procuring services and goods.
- 5.3 Internal Audit is currently contacting a random selection of schools to audit the application of the new Contract Standing Orders for Schools. The results will be reported to the Audit and Standards Committee in July 2009.

6. Summary

- 6.1 In summary the New Contract Standing Orders for Schools is now operational and accessible via the website.
- 6.2 A series of training workshops has been scheduled from March 2009 across the County.
- 6.3 The County Council will offer a sustainable approach to ensure headteachers, governors and Contracting staff are informed about their roles and responsibilities when procuring and contracting services and goods.
- 6.4 Links with the Schools National Procurement programme has been developed to enhance the improvements, in line with Gershon's Efficiency agenda.
- 6.5 Internal Audit will be reporting on their research into the application of CSOfS in schools to the Audit and Standards Committee in June 2009 and further work can be identified from this report.

7. Recommendation

That the Audit and Standards Committee considers the progress made to date and endorses the proposals for the way forward.

MARION DAVIS
Strategic Director for Children,
Young People and Families

Saltisford Office Park
Ansell Way
Warwick

12th February 2009

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Audit & Standards Committee**

Date of Committee **24th February 2009**

Report Title **2007/08 Use of Resources Assessment**

Summary This report includes the Audit Commission's 2007/08 Use of Resources assessment. Overall the Council has been assessed at Level 4.

For further information please contact: Oliver Winters
 Head of Finance
 Tel: 01926 412441

Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? No.

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s) N/A
- Other Elected Members
- Cabinet Member
- Chief Executive
- Legal Jane Pollard
- Finance .David Clarke, reporting officer
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Agenda No 8

Audit & Standards Committee - 24th February 2009.

2007/08 Use of Resources Assessment

Report of the Strategic Director, Resources

Recommendation

That the Committee notes the Audit Commission's 2007/08 Use of Resources Assessment.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's internal auditors are required to carry out an annual Use of Resources assessment as part of the CPA National framework. The assessment evaluates how well the Council manages and uses its resources.
- 1.2 For 2007/08 the Council was assessed as being Level 4, the highest level. Attached is the Audit Commission's assessment report. A representative from the Audit Commission will attend the meeting of the Audit & Standards Committee to answer any questions relating to this assessment.

DAVID CLARKE
Strategic Director, Resources

Shire Hall
Warwick

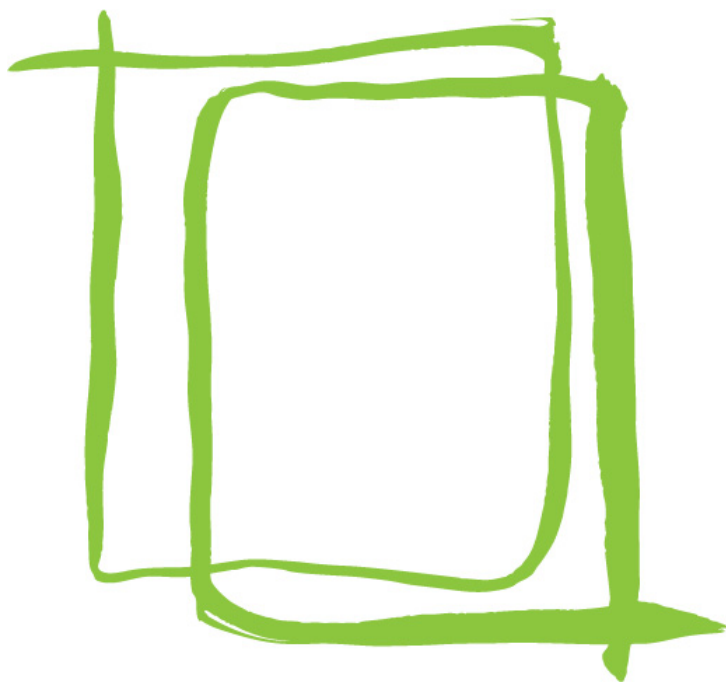
02 February 2009

Use of Resources

Warwickshire County Council

Audit 2007/08

February 2009



Contents

Introduction	3
Use of resources judgements	5
Theme summaries	6
Conclusion	15

Status of our reports

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to non-executive directors/members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any director/member or officer in their individual capacity; or
 - any third party.
-

Introduction

- 1 The Use of Resources assessment evaluates how well councils manage and use their resources. This is the fourth assessment carried out at the council and is the last under the CPA framework. Next year there will be a new assessment which will form part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment. The assessment Use of Resources focuses on the importance of having strategic financial management, sound governance and effective financial reporting arrangements. These should support your Council in the achievement of its priorities and improving services, whilst delivering value for money.
- 2 At the time of the council's Use of Resources assessment a criminal investigation was taking place following a fatal fire incident within the area on 2 November 2007. As the investigation is on going, judgments and findings made in this assessment do not include any consideration of the fire incident and related issues. The council's responsibilities as a Fire and Rescue Authority for Warwickshire have not been examined or considered during this assessment.
- 3 This assessment relates to the financial year 2007/08 and is based on the key lines of enquiry for 2008. Changes to the criteria underpinning the key lines of enquiry were consulted on in April 2007 and the final key lines of enquiry were published in August 2007. These changes were made to:
 - reflect developments in professional guidance, legislative requirements and best practice; and
 - signal some of the changes proposed for the new use of resources under CAA, smoothing the transition to CAA.
- 4 The overall use of resources assessment is made up of five themes. Judgements have been made for each theme using the Audit Commission's scale, see Table 1 below. This scale is used across its inspection and performance assessment frameworks.

Table 1 Standard scale used for assessments and inspections

1	Below minimum requirements – inadequate performance.
2	Only at minimum requirements – adequate performance.
3	Consistently above minimum requirements – performing well.
4	Well above minimum requirements – performing strongly.

-
- 5 In forming our assessment, we have used the methodology set out in the Use of Resources Guidance for Councils 2008, which can be found on the Commission's website. We have also taken account of our findings and conclusions from previous years' assessments and updated these for any changes and improvements to the Council's arrangements.

- 6 The five theme scores for Warwickshire County Council are outlined overleaf.
- 7 This summary sets out our key findings in relation to each theme and key areas for improvement.

Use of resources judgements

Table 2 Summary of scores at theme and KLOE level

Key lines of enquiry (KLOEs)	Score 2008	Score 2007
Financial reporting	3	3
1.1 The Council produces annual accounts in accordance with relevant standards and timetables, supported by comprehensive working papers.	3	3
1.2 The Council promotes external accountability.	3	3
Financial management	4	4
2.1 The Council's medium-term financial strategy, budgets and capital programme are soundly based and designed to deliver its strategic priorities.	4	4
2.2 The Council manages performance against budgets.	4	4
2.3 The Council manages its asset base.	3	3
Financial standing	4	3
3.1 The Council manages its spending within the available resources.	4	3
Internal control	3	4
4.1 The Council manages its significant business risks.	3	3
4.2 The Council has arrangements in place to maintain a sound system of internal control.	3	4
4.3 The Council has arrangements in place that are designed to promote and ensure probity and propriety in the conduct of its business.	3	4
Value for money	3	3
5.1 The Council currently achieves good value for money.	3	3
5.2 The Council manages and improves value for money.	3	3

Theme summaries

- 8 The key findings and conclusions for each of the five themes are summarised in the following tables.

Financial reporting

Theme score 3	
Key findings and conclusions	
KLOE 1.1 The Council produces annual accounts in accordance with relevant standards and timetables, supported by comprehensive working papers.	The annual accounts were to a good standard and an unqualified audit opinion was given. The accounts were produced in accordance with the agreed timetable and there was generally a prompt response to queries raised. The supporting working papers were good. However, there is still scope to make further improvements to some supporting working papers, for example capital.
KLOE 1.2 The Council promotes external accountability.	<p>The Council continues to promote external accountability. It has published its latest accounts and annual audit letter on its website. The statement of accounts has attained the Plain English Crystal Mark and the summary accounts are easy to understand. Agendas, reports and minutes of Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny committees are made available on the Council's website on a timely basis. Website content is available in accessible formats.</p> <p>The Council does not produce an annual report as a single document, but refers to four separate documents on its website. However these documents do not contain information and analysis about the Council's environmental footprint.</p>

Financial management

Theme score 4	
Key findings and conclusions	
<p>KLOE 2.1 The Council's medium-term financial strategy (MTFS), budgets and capital programme are soundly based and designed to deliver its strategic priorities.</p>	<p>The Council has a soundly based MTFS and budgets which are linked to business planning and strategic objectives. There is also evidence that the Council continues to monitor its financial management arrangements, with a medium term financial planning process which has been revised to take into account changes in the way the Council's funding is allocated. The MTFS provides financial detail on partnerships. Different planning scenarios are used throughout the budget process, through assessing the impact of varying council tax levels and savings targets. Key financial risks are considered specifically within the MTFS. Arrangements are in place to direct financial resources towards the achievement of corporate priorities.</p>
<p>KLOE 2.2 The Council manages performance against budgets.</p>	<p>The Council has good arrangements in place to manage performance against budgets. The 2007/08 Revenue Outturn reported a net underspend of £2.8 million. Members receive regular budget monitoring reports which are timely and well presented, focusing on the key risk areas, and there is evidence action is taken in response to any significant variation. There is appropriate financial training for members. Progress on the achievement of efficiency savings is also monitored and over a three year period savings are in excess of Gershon targets. There is evidence that financial management arrangements and working practices are reviewed at a high level within the Council.</p>

Theme score 4	
Key findings and conclusions	
<p>KLOE 2.3 The Council manages its asset base.</p>	<p>Systems continue to develop to assist the Council in assessing asset condition, coordinating asset management information and prioritising the maintenance backlog. Action has been taken to ensure that the requirement to support business cases with robust options appraisals and whole life costing is more consistent across directorates and where proposals do not adequately cover this, they have been rejected.</p> <p>The Council is effectively integrating its approaches to property, with other strategies that facilitate change such as the new ways of working programme, and is working with partners and other agencies to review property requirements on an area basis.</p> <p>The Council has yet to set challenging targets for its assets, such as reducing energy consumption.</p>

Financial standing

Theme score 4	
Key findings and conclusions	
KLOE 3.1 The Council manages its spending within the available resources.	<p>The Council has good arrangements to manage spending within available resources. The budget is closely monitored throughout the year, and 2007/08 spend has been maintained within budget. Reserves have been maintained at an appropriate level. There has been integration of reports on spending and reserves. Targets have been set for the collection of income and arrears recovery, and arrangements are in place to take corrective action where targets are not achieved. Capital programme slippage has fallen significantly for 2007/08 as a result of close monitoring throughout the year.</p> <p>Like all councils Warwickshire has a number of unforeseen financial pressures due in the current economic climate. We are aware that additional energy costs and the increase demand for services during the recession are already impacting generally on all Council's finances. Warwickshire is currently addressing potential overspends in 2008/09 and the financial consequences seem likely to impact further in 2009/10.</p>

Internal control

Theme score 3	
Key findings and conclusions	
<p>KLOE 4.1 The Council manages its significant business risks.</p>	<p>There has been a clear improvement in 2007/08 in implementing a new corporate risk management framework. Partnership risks are now being systematically captured. The new framework considers the opportunity side of risk to be identified but this is not fully embedded and sustainability impact assessments are not routinely carried out for major projects.</p> <p>The Council has developed good risk management training and supporting documentation for staff and members. However, training for members has been on a voluntary basis rather than against identified needs. As a result its impact was not maximised in 2007/08.</p>
<p>KLOE 4.2 The Council has arrangements in place to maintain a sound system of internal control.</p>	<p>The Council continues to have good arrangements in place to maintain a sound system of internal control. There is a strong assurance framework in place which links the Council's objectives to risks, controls and assurances, and provides members with information to support the Annual Governance Statement. Effective scrutiny arrangements are in place. The core functions of an audit committee, as identified in the CIPFA guidance, are being undertaken by the Audit and Standards Committee.</p> <p>The Council approved a business continuity management policy and strategy during 2007. However it has not yet been able to demonstrate that it obtains assurance on a risk basis of the viability of its significant contractors/partners business continuity plans.</p>

Theme summaries

Theme score 3	
Key findings and conclusions	
<p>KLOE 4.3 The Council has arrangements in place that are designed to promote and ensure probity and propriety in the conduct of its business.</p>	<p>The Council has a good record in promoting and ensuring probity and propriety in the conduct of its business. Arrangements are in place to proactively raise the standards of ethical behaviour among staff and members. The Council undertakes proactive anti fraud and corruption work and demonstrates a strong anti-fraud culture. The Council's recent corporate governance survey identified a need to strengthen staff awareness and confidence in the confidential reporting arrangements, and we understand that action is being taken to improve arrangements in this area.</p> <p>The Council together with the Warwickshire Direct Partnership has introduced a Fair Processing Notice, which is communicated both visibly and verbally to customers at one stop shops and through phone calls. All application forms for services and benefits should have an appropriate fair processing notification permitting data sharing for prevention and detection of fraud and corruption.</p>

Value for money

Theme score 3	
Key findings and conclusions	
<p>KLOE 5.1 The Council currently achieves good value for money.</p>	<p>Overall costs and performance continue to compare well with peers. However, the council's overall VFM rankings compared with other counties has shifted significantly. Overall spending is now ranked about average with Education and Children's Services just above average and Adult's Services also moving from the lowest quartile to below average ranking. This change is almost entirely due to a change in the way that the government calculates population figures. Warwickshire, together with some London Boroughs has been adversely impacted.</p> <p>Overall performance is good and most BVPIs improved in 2007/08 including improved performance in community and road safety BVPIs. Continued investment and focus in Adults Services has resulted in improving external assessments but is still to deliver significantly improved outcomes.</p> <p>Spending in the Children and Young People Directorate is matched with good outcomes and this is a council priority. The Council's policy of paying above average rates for foster care is helping to minimise the number of children in residential care. Spending on Environment is low, with good performance in terms of waste disposal and highways maintenance. In terms of the Culture Block which is comparatively high spend but not a priority - high overall costs per head of population for libraries is mitigated by high usage so the cost per user is comparatively low. Satisfaction is also high. A similar situation exists for museums.</p>

Theme summaries

Theme score 3	
	<p>Business cases are improving but need to be further strengthened in light of tight financial resources. The capital programme is well managed with an improvement in slippage from the 2006/07 levels. However, the impact of the economic downturn is having an impact on capital receipts and this will ultimately feed into the Council's capital programme.</p>
<p>KLOE 5.2 The Council manages and improves value for money.</p>	<p>The Council has generally good corporate systems in place to monitor performance and VFM but its financial and performance information is not yet fully integrated. Benchmarking including unit cost benchmarking is widely used and a VFM assessment tool has been developed in the Supporting People Programme. However, the Council has a limited understanding of its transaction costs and how these compare.</p> <p>The 2008/09 budget setting process saw full VFM assessments included across all services, and Star Chamber challenge sessions with Heads of Service. The Council has also introduced differential efficiency targets and is allowing budget under spends to be carried forward to improve the quality of spending decisions. The first wave of VFM reviews initiated in 2007 have largely concluded and although it has been difficult to establish clear outcomes this year they have informed the 2008/09 budget and efficiency targets.</p> <p>Performance against the delivery of efficiency targets continues to be good with £23.2 million efficiency gains in three years to March 2008 compared to a cumulative target of £19.6 million.</p>

Theme score 3**Key findings and conclusions**

The approach to procurement has been strengthened to minimise the cost of procurement and there has been good improvement in the commissioning and decommissioning of services delivered through the Supporting People programme. The Council is continuing to invest in ICT to improve efficiency with a significant programme coming through the modern and flexible workforce programme. There is some evidence that social objectives are influencing decisions; resulting in co locating the Warwick Post Office in the new One Stop Shop and locating the contact centre in a regeneration area. The delivery of efficiencies through partnerships is at an early stage. A planned joint commissioning board with health partners in ASC did not materialise in 2007/08 but this was not attributed to the lack of commitment from the council. The Council has an external funding group to pursue external funding to deliver council/LAA priorities. PFI funding is being perused jointly in partnership with other authorities for a new energy from waste plant.

Conclusion

9 The Council is performing strongly with an overall score of 4.

Use of resources 2008/09

- 10 From 2008/09, the auditors' assessment of use of resources will be based on new key lines of enquiry and will form part of the new performance assessment framework for local government and its partners, known as Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).
- 11 Key lines of enquiry for use of resources were published in May 2008 following consultation. These reflect the needs of CAA and incorporate a number of improvements including: a clearer focus on value for money achievements and further emphasis on commissioning of services, outcomes for local people and partnership working.
- 12 The assessment is structured into three themes:
- managing finances: sound and strategic financial management;
 - governing the business: strategic commissioning and good governance; and
 - managing resources: effective management of natural resources, assets and people.
- 13 The approach to use of resources will continue to be risk based and proportionate, drawing on evidence from previous years where relevant. Not all key lines of enquiry in the managing resources theme will be assessed each year. For single tier and county councils auditors will assess natural resources and strategic asset management (where there is continuity with 2008).
- 14 The Commission will specify each year in its annual work programme and fees document which key lines of enquiry will be assessed in that year.

The Audit Commission

The Audit Commission is an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services to deliver better outcomes for everyone.

Our work across local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services means that we have a unique perspective. We promote value for money for taxpayers, auditing the £200 billion spent by 11,000 local public bodies.

As a force for improvement, we work in partnership to assess local public services and make practical recommendations for promoting a better quality of life for local people.

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For further information on the work of the Commission please contact:

Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

Tel: 0844 798 1212 Fax: 0844 798 2945 Textphone (minicom): 0844 798 2946

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Audit & Standards Committee**

Date of Committee **24th February 2009**

Report Title **Data Quality Audit Report**

Summary This report provides the Committee with a Data Quality Audit Summary report and action plan, resulting from an audit carried out by the Audit Commission in September - October 2008.

For further information please contact:
 Tricia Morrison Elizabeth Abbott
 Corporate Planning and Performance and
 Performance Manager Improvement Officer
 Tel: 01926 736319 Tel: 01926 412026
 triciamorrison@warwickshire.gov.uk elizabethabbott@warwickshire.gov.uk

Would the recommendation decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? [please identify relevant plan/budget provision] No.

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s) N/A
- Other Elected Members .Cllr Stevens, Cllr Haynes, Cllr Booth,
- Cabinet Member Cllr Timms.....
- Chief Executive
- Legal .Jane Pollard.....
- Finance
- Other Chief Officers David Carter
 Dave Clarke
- District Councils
- Health Authority

Police

Other Bodies/Individuals Greta Neeham

FINAL DECISION Yes

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

Further consideration by this Committee

To Council

To Cabinet

To an O & S Committee

To an Area Committee

Further Consultation

Audit and Standards Committee - 24th February 2009.

Data Quality Audit Report

**Report of the Strategic Director of Performance and
Development**

Recommendation

The Audit and Standards Committee is recommended to:

- Note the findings in the Data Quality Report
- Approve the response to the recommendations made by the Audit Commission

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Published performance indicators are used as a means of reducing the burden of regulation and awarding freedoms and flexibilities. This has made reliable performance information, and the quality of the underlying data, significantly more important.
- 1.2 Regulators and government departments need to be assured that reported information reflects actual performance. This will provide confidence that they are focusing on the key areas for improvement.
- 1.3 Auditors work on data quality and performance information supports the Audit Commission's reliance on performance indicators in its service assessments for Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).

2.0 Approach

- 2.1 The Audit Commission undertook an audit of our Data Quality arrangements took place between July – October 2008. The purpose of this was to review the practices and procedures we have in place (Appendix A).
- 2.2 The review of data quality was undertaken as a three stage process, as follows:
 - **Management arrangements** – to review the corporate management arrangements for data quality in place and whether these are being applied in practice. The findings contribute to the Auditor's conclusion under the Code of Audit Practice on the Council's arrangements to secure value for money (the VFM conclusion).

- **Analytical review** – Sampling 2007/08 BVPI and non-BVPI data, based on risk assessment.
- **Data quality spot checks** – In-depth review of a sample of 2007/08 PIs all of which come from a list of specified BVPIs and non-BVPIs used in CPA, to determine whether arrangements to secure data quality are delivering accurate, timely and accessible information in practice.

3.0 Key Findings

3.1 The Data Quality Audit found that overall:

- The Council's corporate management arrangements for data quality remain at minimum requirements. The Council has reiterated its commitment to securing good data quality and work has been carried out to ensure that this is communicated internally. However awareness of the policy continues to vary. The introduction of the corporate report card has given additional focus to the use of council and partner data to monitor and manage performance.
- The analytical review of sampling 2007/08 BVPI and non-BVPI data, based on risk assessment identified that the PI values tested either fell within expected ranges or were substantiated by evidence.
- The data quality spot checks of PIs found that two of the three indicators (BV82a and BV82b) were fairly stated. However, one indicator (IPF Cost per library visit) was understated by 2.6% and required amendment.

3.2 The feedback on the management arrangements identified the following:

- **Governance and leadership** – progress on ensuring that processes within directorates effectively deliver data quality is mixed. The revised performance management framework includes data quality as a key element and the Corporate Planning and Performance team have ensured that directorate contacts are updated on the contents of the policy.
- **Policies** – although the corporate data quality policy has been in operation for over a year and its contents reiterated, its profile and awareness across directorates continues to be inconsistent. There is a risk that if the policy is not seen to be relevant within directorates, it may not be adhered to and opportunities to identify and pass on good practice will be missed.
- **Systems and processes** – the Council has made progress on establishing systems to record, analyse and report performance data although there is a recognition that scope for improvement remains.
- **People and skills** – progress continues to be made on specifying responsibility for the data quality responsibilities of individual staff but this continues to be directorate rather than corporately led.
- **Data use and reporting** - data on performance information is increasingly used to monitor and manage performance. The new corporate report card

provides councillors with clear and comprehensive information on progress towards corporate and partnership targets.

4.0 Action Plan

4.1 As a result of the findings in the Data Quality Audit Report, the Auditor has produced an action plan outlining five recommendations for the Authority to address:

- **R1** Corporate Centre and Performance Forum to discuss approaches being adopted in directorates to provide specific guidance on implementation of data quality, identify examples of good practice and provide support where necessary.
- **R2** Linked to recommendation R1, Corporate Centre to work with Performance Forum to develop practical advice for directorates on highlighting the corporate data quality policy, and its relevance to the work of directorates.
- **R3** Ensure that, as the corporate performance management system develops further, its ability to produce information that is right first time is prioritised, in order to reduce the need for data cleansing exercises
- **R4** Develop corporate approaches to link targets set for staff to the achievement of data quality outcomes.
- **R5** Ensure that the Library visit numerator is calculated on a FRS17 basis as required by the guidance.

5.0 Recommendations

The Audit and Standards Committee is recommended to:

- Note the findings in the Data Quality Report
- Approve the response to the recommendations made by the Audit Commission

DAVID CARTER
Strategic Director of
Performance and
Development

Shire Hall
Warwick

23rd January 2009

Data Quality

Warwickshire County Council

Audit 2008/09

December 2008



Contents

Introduction	3
Detailed findings	5
Appendix 1 – Action Plan	10

Status of our reports

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to non-executive directors/members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any director/member or officer in their individual capacity; or
 - any third party.
-

Introduction

- 1 The purpose of this report is to summarise the findings from our work on data quality for 2008/09.
- 2 Auditors' work on data quality and performance information supports the Commission's reliance on performance indicators (PI) in its service assessments for comprehensive performance assessment (CPA).
- 3 Our work on data quality is complemented by the Audit Commission's paper, 'Improving information to support decision making: standards for better quality data'. This paper sets out standards, for adoption on a voluntary basis, to support improvement in data quality. The expected impact of the Audit Commission's work on data quality is that it will drive improvement in the quality of local government performance information, leading to greater confidence in the supporting data on which performance assessments are based.

Scope of our work

- 4 We have followed the Audit Commission's three-stage approach to the review of data quality as set out in Table 1.

Table 1 Data quality approach

Stage 1	Management arrangements A review using key lines of enquiry (KLOE) to determine whether proper corporate management arrangements for data quality are in place, and whether these are being applied in practice. The findings contribute to the auditor's conclusion under the Code of Audit Practice on the Council's arrangements to secure value for money (the VFM conclusion).
Stage 2	Analytical review An analytical review of 2007/08 BVPI and non-BVPI data and selection of a sample for testing based on risk assessment.
Stage 3	Data quality spot checks In-depth review of a sample of 2007/08 PIs all of which come from a list of specified BVPIs and non-BVPIs used in CPA, to determine whether arrangements to secure data quality are delivering accurate, timely and accessible information in practice.

Summary conclusions

Stage 1 – Management arrangements

- 5 The Council's overall management arrangements for ensuring data quality remain at minimum requirements.
- 6 The Council has reiterated its commitment to securing good quality data and work has been carried out to ensure that this is communicated internally. However awareness of the policy continues to vary. Progress has been made on establishing systems to record, analyse and report data used to manage performance although the Council acknowledges that more work remains to be done, for example to ensure that systems to produce data that is right first time are in place.
- 7 Further progress has been made to specify staff responsibility for individual staff and to provide training. There is scope for target setting to be linked more closely to the achievement of data quality outcomes.
- 8 The introduction of the corporate report card has given additional focus to the use of council and partner data to monitor and manage performance.

Stage 2 – Analytical review

- 9 Our analytical review work at Stage 2 identified that the PI values reviewed either fell within expected ranges or were substantiated by evidence.

Stage 3 – Data quality spot checks

- 10 Our review and spot checks of PIs BV82a and BV82b concluded that they were fairly stated. However, the IPF Cost per Library Visit indicator was understated by 2.6 per cent and required amendment.
- 11 An action plan has been agreed with the council (see Appendix 1) to address the issues arising from this review.

Detailed findings

Management arrangements (Stage 1)

12 Overall, the Council's corporate arrangements for data quality remain at minimum requirements. The Council's self assessment identified some improvements in arrangements since last year's review but concluded that the overall arrangements remained at the same level. Because our assessment agrees with this we have kept the number of additional recommendations to a minimum as the ongoing effective implementation of those from previous years should help the Council respond to the areas that remain to be improved.

Governance and leadership

13 The Council has reiterated its corporate commitment to data quality. The revised performance management framework includes data quality as a key element and the Corporate Planning and Performance team have ensured that directorate contacts are updated on the contents of the policy.

14 Progress on ensuring that processes within directorates effectively deliver quality data is mixed. Some directorates (eg Environment and Economy) have produced and are implementing specific information on directorate responsibilities and roles. But in other areas (eg Adult Health and Community Services where a strategy and action plan to further embed systems has been planned for the last two years) progress is slower.

15 The Council is starting to embed regular review of data quality issues but an Internal Audit review has noted the need to improve data quality checks. The Technical Officers Group (TOG) has been replaced by a Performance Forum. It has considered the lessons learnt from an exercise to identify issues and concerns around the collection of information to feed the corporate report card. Involvement in exercises of this type help the Forum to establish a role in identification and dissemination of good practice that was originally planned to be part of the TOG's remit.

Recommendation

R1 Corporate Centre and Performance Forum to discuss approaches being adopted in directorates to provide specific guidance on implementation of data quality, identify examples of good practice and provide support where necessary.

Policies

- 16** Although the corporate data quality policy has now been in operation for over a year and its contents reiterated as noted in section one, its profile and awareness across directorates of it continues to be inconsistent. Officers from across directorates commented that following initial publicity, further communication on its contents and expected impact on the work of directorates had been limited until recent work by the Corporate Performance Team. There is a risk that if the policy is not seen to be relevant within directorates, it may not be adhered to and opportunities to identify and pass on good practice will be missed.
- 17** Work continues to be carried out in directorates to ensure that the corporate policy is publicised although progress varies. Within Adult Health and Community services for example the situation remains the same as for last year in that there are policies on the browser but not a systematic approach to ensuring they are used by all staff.

Recommendation

- R2** Linked to recommendation 1, Corporate Centre to work with Performance Forum to develop practical advice for directorates on highlighting the corporate data quality policy, and its relevance to the work of directorates

Systems and processes

- 18** The Council has made progress on establishing systems to record, analyse and report performance data although there is a recognition that scope for improvement remains. At the time of the audit delayed roll out of the upgraded Performance Plus software has limited the ability of some areas to get the maximum benefit from the system although the Council has been able to successfully implement the use of the corporate report card.
- 19** There are controls to ensure that information systems produce accurate information although the Council has identified that these need to be adhered to more closely. An Internal Audit report on performance management noted the need to ensure that reviews of data quality should be undertaken annually by leads in directorates.
- 20** Systems for producing data that is right first time are not yet fully developed. There are still a number of exercises in data cleansing that take place across directorates before it is signed off.
- 21** Work to ensure that performance information systems are secure is developing and gaining a higher profile across the Council. The appointment of a Corporate Risk Manager has helped to raise awareness of the issues and the introduction of the Business Continuity Management Strategy provides a framework for delivering the corporate business continuity policy. Although the impact of these initiatives has not been fully felt yet they do help embed the corporate message about the importance of ensuring that business critical information systems are secure.

Detailed findings

Recommendation

- R3** Ensure that as the corporate performance management system develops further, its ability to produce information that is right first time is prioritised in order to reduce the need for data cleansing exercises

People and skills

- 22** Progress continues to be made on specifying responsibility for the data quality responsibilities of individual staff but this continues to be directorate rather than corporately led. Our review found examples of work carried out in Environment and Economy and Adult Health and Community to ensure that relevant job descriptions contain information on data quality responsibilities. The response to last year's report indicates that a corporate event was planned to address our recommendation on spreading good practice in this area. The event had not taken place at the time that our work was carried out and we reiterate the importance of ensuring that there is a corporate 'stock take' of progress on the issue to ensure that good practice is captured and duplication of effort is avoided. The Council could also build on the work being carried out in directorates by developing corporate approaches linking staff targets to the achievement of data quality outcomes.
- 23** Directorates continue to develop methods to train staff with data quality responsibilities. As we commented last year this does ensure that the training provided is relevant and focused but there remains a risk that without some degree of corporate involvement or review, key messages and good practice may be missed. The Performance Forum has assumed responsibility for this work and as with the above issue, rather than making a new recommendation we reiterate the importance of last year's being implemented.

Recommendation

- R4** Develop corporate approaches to link targets set for staff to the achievement of data quality outcomes.

Data use and reporting

- 24** The Council is ensuring that data supporting performance information is used to manage and improve service delivery and that its relevance is reviewed. An internal report on the development of the corporate report card has been carried out and changes made in the light of the transition to the national indicator set and the introduction of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

- 25** Data on performance information is increasingly used to monitor and manage performance. The new corporate report card provides councillors with clear and comprehensive information on progress towards corporate and partnership targets.
- 26** Directorates have validation processes in place to ensure the accuracy of data. In Resources for example all PIs have a named owner and in Adult Health and Community and in Community Protection the importance of effective verification is consistently stressed.

Analytical review (Stage 2)

- 27** An analytical review of the following BVPIs and non-BVPIs was carried out. The findings, subject to the validation of a sample of PIs in stage 3 spot checks, are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Analytical review findings

2007/08 Performance indicator	Assessment
BVPI 165	Variance from 2006/07 and value within Audit Commission parameters.
BVPI 82a	Real performance improvement.
BVPI 82b	Real performance improvement.
Non-BVPI: Cost Per Library Visit	Variance from 2006/07 and value within Audit Commission parameters.

Data quality spot checks (Stage 3)

- 28** A number of PIs were reviewed using a series of detailed spot checks and audit tests. Our findings are shown in Table 3 overleaf.

Detailed findings

Table 3 Spot check findings

Performance indicator	Assessment	Comment
Environment BVPI 82a Recycling Performance	The PI @ 17.5 per cent is considered to be fairly stated.	Testing confirmed the PI was calculated as per the definition.
Environment BVPI 82b Composting Performance	The PI @ 17.9 per cent is considered to be fairly stated.	Testing confirmed the PI was calculated as per the definition.
Culture Cost Per Library Visit (IPF)	The draft PI at £3.79 was understated by 2.6 per cent. As a result the PI was amended to £3.89	The numerator had not been completed on a FRS17 basis (including pension costs) as required by the guidance.

Recommendation

R5 Ensure that the Library visit numerator is calculated on a FRS17 basis as required by the guidance.

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
5	R1 Corporate Centre and Performance Forum to discuss approaches being adopted in directorates to provide specific guidance on implementation of data quality, identify examples of good practice and provide support where necessary.	3	Monica Fogarty		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing Corporate Data Quality Policy will be reviewed and if necessary updated in consultation with the performance Forum to ensure it reflects examples of good practice from across Directorates as well as external peers in terms of implementing and embedding data quality across the organisation. Implementation of the policy will be the responsibility of the performance leads within each directorate and formal support and guidance and steer to be provided by the Corporate Centre. A mini data quality audit will be carried out through the Performance Forum by the Corporate Centre in order to ensure a more consistent approach throughout the Council. 	<p>March 2009</p> <p>May 2009</p> <p>March 2009</p>

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
6	R2 Linked to recommendation 1, Corporate Centre to work with Performance Forum to develop practical advice for directorates on highlighting the corporate data quality policy, and its relevance to the work of directorates.	3	Monica Fogarty		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A formal training programme to be introduced for Officers and Members to ensure that data quality is incorporated into their day to day roles A framework to be introduced building in the requirements of each directorate in support of the Corporate Data Quality Policy which meets specific service requirements. Performance Leads to take a proactive role in taking the messages forward into their own directorates. An online tutorial to be developed and be used as part of staff induction especially for those whose data quality is a core component of their job description. 	<p>June 2009</p> <p>May 2009</p> <p>March 2009</p> <p>July 2009</p>
7	R3 Ensure that as the corporate performance management system develops further, its ability to produce information that is right first time is prioritised in order to reduce the need for data cleansing exercises.	3	Monica Fogarty		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of the Technical Appendix to include more robust data quality arrangements will be taken forward into 2009/10. The information will be challenged and reviewed at the year end to ensure that the process and methods of calculation are accurately stated. We will investigate the use of data quality control on Performance Plus for all users including our LAA Partners. 	<p>March 2009</p> <p>April 2009</p> <p>May 2009</p>

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
7	R4 Develop corporate approaches to link targets set for staff to the achievement of data quality outcomes.	3	Monica Fogarty		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of our on going timetable of reviewing the Corporate Performance Management Framework, we will work collaboratively with Directorate Performance leads to ensure that clear links are made between targets set for staff and reinforcing the importance of ensuring that information is produced that is right first time and meets business requirements. The review of the Technical Appendix for 2009/10 will include more robust data quality arrangements including the signing off of all officers responsible for producing the information as well as the agreed outturn. Further reinforcing the need for all staff to embed data quality in to their every day role. 	<p>July 2009</p> <p>April 2009</p>
9	R5 Ensure that the Library visit numerator is calculated on a FRS17 basis as required by the guidance.	3	Simon Robson		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will ensure that CIPFA guidelines for calculating the cost per library visit indicator are adhered to by those producing the nominator and denominator for the calculation. The guidelines will be circulated to the staff involved in the data submission process and we will ensure that all staff are clear as to what is required from them. Prior to submission the data will be checked and signed by the Strategic Head of the Library and Information Service to confirm that the data has been produced according to the guidance provided. 	March 2009

The Audit Commission

The Audit Commission is an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services to deliver better outcomes for everyone.

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For further information on the work of the Commission please contact:

Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

Tel: 0844 798 1212 Fax: 0844 798 2945 Textphone (minicom): 0844 798 2946

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee	Audit And Standards Committee
Date of Committee	24 February 2009
Report Title	Audit And Standards Committee Work Programme
Summary	The report encloses the latest work programme for the committee
For further information please contact:	John Wright Committee Manager Tel: 01926 412320 johnwright@warwickshire.gov.uk
Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?	No.
Background papers	None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s) N/A
- Other Elected Members
- Cabinet Member
- Chief Executive
- Legal
- Finance
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

**ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS
RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

MEETING DATE	ITEM AND RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	OBJECTIVE OF SCRUTINY	REPORT TYPE				CORPORATE PRIORITIES/LAA			
			Member Requested Item	Performance Management	Policy Review/ Development	Overview	Raising Levels of Educational Attainment	Caring for Older People	Pursuing a Stable Environment and Economy	Protecting the Community and making Warwickshire a safer place to live
24/02/09	Contract Standing Orders Audit 2008			X						
	New constitutional arrangements				X					
	Contract Standing Orders for Schools				X					
	Health and Safety Annual report - update			X						
	Warwickshire's Project Management Approach Officer				X					
	Internal Audit Report for the period 1 Oct 2008 to 31 Dec 2008			X						

28/05/09	Annual Governance Statement			X					
	Internal Audit Annual Report (EXEMPT)			X					
	Audit Commission - Recommendations Tracking Report			X					
	Annual Audit Letter			X					
	Strategy for Implementing International Financial Reporting Standards			X					
On going Issues to be monitored	Arrangement of training for members on the Comprehensive Area Assessment			X	X				
	Cabinet approval of the updated anti fraud and corruption policy and supporting strategy			X	X				
	Update of Case File Recording			X	X				