

The **AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE** met at **WARWICK** on the **23 November 2009**

**Present:** -

**Independent Members**

John Bridgeman CBE (Chair)  
Rob Jeanes  
Bob Meacham OBE

**County Councillors**

Clare Hopkinson  
Tim Naylor  
Kate Rolfe  
Bob Stevens  
Helen Walton  
John Vereker

**Officers**

David Carter, Strategic Director, Customers, Workforce and Governance  
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator  
Diana King, Service Manager, Performance & Quality Local Commissioning.  
Ruth Pickering, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager  
Jane Pollard, Democratic Services Manager  
Garry Rollason, Audit and Risk Manager  
Oliver Winters, Head of Finance

**Also present:**

David Rigg, District Auditor, Audit Commission  
Helen Lillington, Audit Manager, Audit Commission

**1. General**

**(1) Apologies for absence**

None

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

None.

**(3) Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 21 September 2009**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2009 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## **Matters Arising**

### **(1) Minute 1 (3) Matters Arising Standards Board For England Bulletin No 42 and 43**

Jane Pollard confirmed that, in addition to being covered by the authority's insurance, co-opted members were included in the County Council's indemnity cover.

### **(2) Minute 5.4 External Auditors Annual Governance Report 2008/09**

Cash in the Bank error – the Committee noted that the error in terms of coding involving two schools had been rectified. Oliver Winters said that Resources Directorate was looking at introducing new financial systems to overcome this problem occurring in the future.

### **(3) Minute 7 – Resignation of Mark McGowan**

**Resolved** that a letter be sent to Mark Magowan thanking him for his work with the Committee and for the County Council.

## **STANDARDS ITEMS**

None

## **AUDIT ITEMS**

### **2. Update on Case Recording**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director Adult, Health and Community Services updating members on the Quarterly Case File Audit together with more detailed commentary as requested by the Committee at a previous meeting.

Diana King explained the further measures that had been introduced to ensure improvement in the quality and quantity of case recording. A big improvement had been seen from June 2009 following the appointment of a team of 5 Quality Assurance clerks who had taken on the responsibility of case file audit.

In reply to questions Diana King explained that –

- (1) Where there was a drop in the level of recording this was usually found to relate to high levels of service activity;
- (2) The National Indicator for putting together a care package was 28 days;
- (3) Staffing levels were fairly stable and better in Warwickshire than other authorities;

- (4) The review of the Quality Assurance Panel in 2009 and the resignation of two of the service user representatives provided the opportunity to introduce a Quality Assurance Panel (Customers), chaired by the Service Manager and made up ten service users and carers.

The Chair thanked Diana King for a very informative report and stressed the importance of this work.

**Resolved** to note progress made in the auditing of case file records.

### **3. Health and Safety Annual Report 2008/09**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Customers, Workforce and Governance, which provided an annual position statement on the management of health and safety within the County Council. The report summarised the health and safety activities within the Authority from 1st April 2008 to the 31st March 2009.

During discussion comments were noted as follows:

1. The Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager was commended on her report;
2. Concern was expressed about the low percentage received from the Fire and Rescue Service for the health and safety questionnaire in the 2008 staff survey;
3. That it would be useful if future reports contained a more detailed breakdown of the type of accident and also actual numbers in addition to percentages;
4. That it was difficult to judge how well the County Council was doing without comparable statistics from other similar shire counties;
5. A question was asked about the number of cases of swine flu.

In reply David Carter said that -

- (1) The Fire and Rescue Improvement Plan would address the concerns highlighted;
- (2) Corporate Services and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee would consider a report on sickness absence where this issue would be examined in greater detail.

Ruth Pickering added that –

- (1) Improved reporting and training mechanisms had meant that the numbers of recorded accidents had increased;
- (2) This improved recording would mean that a more detailed analysis of serious accidents could be included in future reports;
- (3) There was no benchmarking data available to compare the statistics against those of other authorities but she undertook to take this up with the West Midlands Local Government Association;
- (4) The Environment and Economy Directorate was leading on addressing the swine flu epidemic, with advice from the PCT, and was recording the number of cases.

## **Resolved that the Committee –**

- (1) Endorses the priorities recommended in the report;
- (2) Asks that future report include actual numbers,
- (3) Notes with concern the areas where there has been an increase in the number of serious accidents.
- (4) Refers the report to the Corporate Services and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.

## **4. Audits and Standards Work Programme**

The Committee noted the report of the Strategic Director of Customers, Workforce and Governance outlining the latest work programme.

### **4 (a) Use of Resources 2008/09**

Oliver Winters presented the report of the Strategic Director, Resources which included the Audit Commission's report on the County Council's Use of Resources assessment for 2008/09. He highlighted that under the old model used in 2007/08 the Authority achieved a Level 4 rating and that under the revised model used for the 2008/09 assessment the Authority achieved Level 3.

David Rigg explained that Warwickshire County Council had done well in achieving a score of 3 out of 4 and had good financial plans and managed its spending well. At the current time no shire county had achieved a level 4 score. Authorities were able to appeal against the rating given to them but Warwickshire had indicated that it would not appeal. A level 4 would be for an exemplar authority. He referred to page 6 of the Audit Commission's report, which listed the score against each of the resource theme scores. With regard to Managing Finances and Governing the Business, a level 3 score had been given but a level 2 score given for Managing Resources. The Council had made good progress in its approach to the use of managing resources (level 2 score), the weaknesses identified related to –

- The Climate Change Strategy and the lack of baseline data in relation to environmental sustainability;
- Working with partners in relation to waste treatment and recycling;
- Quantifying the environmental impact of working with partners and this partnership not including the health sector;
- Asset Management – the impact of the recession on enabling delivery of corporate priorities investment on property management.

In reply to questions David Rigg said that –

1. he was not aware of any authority that had achieved a level 4 score;
2. no unexpected new areas of assessment were likely to be brought in next year except for "how the workforce was managed" but notice had been given of this work;
3. the Council had done well in achieving a 3 out of 4 score and was still a high performing authority that provided value for money.

The Chair thanked the Audit Commission representatives for their presentation and valuable work in producing the report.

## **5. Any Other Business**

There was no urgent business.

## **6. Future Meeting Dates**

Following discussion of the proposed meeting dates for the forthcoming year it was –

### **Resolved that:**

- (1) The 22 February 2010 meeting date be brought forward to Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February at 10:00 am;
- (2) Further consideration be given to the meeting dates for 2010 to 2011 taking into account members preference for Tuesday or Thursday meetings.

## **7. Report Containing Confidential or Exempt Information**

Resolved 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 & 7 of the Local Government Act 1972'.

## **8. Internal Audit Report 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30 September 2009**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Customers, Workforce and Governance that summarised the results of internal audit work during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30 September 2009.

### **Resolved -**

That the results of internal audit work in the period 1 April 2009 to 30 September 2009 be noted.

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Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 12.55 p.m.