

The **AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE** met at **WARWICK** on the **3 February 2010**

Present: -

Independent Members

John Bridgeman CBE (Chair)

Rob Jeanes

County Councillors

Sarah Boad

Tim Naylor

Bob Stevens

Helen Walton

John Vereker CBE

Officers

David Carter, Strategic Director, Customers, Workforce and Governance

David Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources

Sarah Duxbury, Corporate Legal Services Manager

Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator

Gill Jowers, Local Commissioning Division

Jane Pollard, Democratic Services Manager

Greta Needham, Head of Law and Governance

Garry Rollason, Audit and Risk Manager

Also present:

Helen Lillington, Audit Manager, Audit Commission

Guy Buxton, Audit Commission

1. General

(The order of the minutes reflects the order in which they appear on the agenda and not the order they were discussed.)

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Clare Hopkinson and Bob Meacham OBE

(2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 23 November 2009

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2009 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record subject to the name of Councillor Sarah Boad being added to the list of those present and the deletion of Councillor Kate Rolfe.

Matters Arising

Minute 1 (3) Resignation of Mark Magowan

The Committee noted that a letter had been sent to Mark Magowan thanking him for his work with the Committee and for the County Council.

2. Standards for England - Bulletin No 46

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director Customers, Workforce and Governance on the Standards Board Bulletin No. 46

Jane Pollard reported that the Communities and Local Government (CLG) intended to issue a new Code of Conduct on 1 May. She highlighted that the main change was that criminal conduct would come within the ambit of the code, but would exclude fixed penalty offences.

The Chair commended the recent training provided by the County Council on Local Assessment of Complaints, which was well attended, and asked whether further training would be provided. In response Jane Pollard said that further training had been arranged to follow on from 18 May Council meeting

Resolved that the content of the latest Standards Board for England Bulletin be noted.

3. Presentation by Gill Jowers, Local Commissioning Division on Direct Payments Scheme.

Gill Jowers, with the aid of a power point presentation and DVD explained delivery of the personalisation agenda, and highlighted the –

- (1) Background to Direct Payments (the legislative framework and customers' views);
- (2) Key challenges and management of risks;
- (3) General Plans for the future.

In reply to concerns expressed about the Direct Payments Scheme and the potential risks attached to the personalisation agenda Gill Jowers explained that –

- (1) Customers had the flexibility to recruit their own carers, and these could be chosen from, for example, a neighbour, family or friends. Support for recruitment could be provided by the County Council or the Rowan Organisation;
- (2) The Rowan Organisation had been appointed, following competitive tender, to provide independent support to customers;
- (3) Following the recruitment process the Adult Social Care Management Team would review outcomes and the Social Care Management Team would provide ongoing monitoring and management of bank accounts;

- (4) The Direct Payment Scheme provided greater personal flexibility and choice and allowed customers to use their funding to achieve the outcomes that worked best for them;

Garry Rollason confirmed that 12 months previously an audit had been undertaken of the Direct Payment Scheme and new risk based monitoring arrangements introduced. This was a national scheme about which much guidance had been issued.

The Committee thanked Gill Jowers for her presentation and asked for a further update in 12 months time and for that update to include the results of any follow-up audit..

4. Review of Contract Standing Orders

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Customers, Workforce and Governance outlining proposed changes to Contract Standing Orders.

Sarah Duxbury highlighted the clarifications and changes that were being proposed.

In response to comments about the proposed revisions, and concerns expressed about compliance and monitoring procedures, the officers commented that –

- (1) The County Council's Contract Standing Orders were based on an established Cipfa model with local variations;
- (2) ICT was an area identified for further work;
- (3) The role of the Evaluation Team was to ensure value for money and to use their knowledge of market prices to protect the Council;
- (4) An audit of compliance with Contract Standing Orders was carried out annually (see later agenda item, minute 11);
- (5) A strengthened approach had been adopted for dealing with requests for exemptions;
- (6) The establishment of a Senior Officer Management Board to monitor the progress of major contracts once they had been let was intended to strengthen contract management.

Resolved to recommend to Cabinet and to Council that the revised Contract Standing Orders attached to this report at Appendix 1 are adopted subject to any minor amendments made by the Strategic Director of Customers, Workforce and Governance and the Strategic Director of Resources in advance of those meetings.

5. Annual Audit Letter

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources.

Helen Lillington presented the Audit Commission's report highlighting the findings from the 2008/09 audit and from the Comprehensive Area Assessment. She reminded Members that the preliminary finding had been reported and discussed at the Committee's November 2009 meeting. The Council had

achieved an overall score of 3 out of 4 under the new assessment and demonstrated that it had adequate processes in place to manage its use of resources and deliver value for money – performs well.

The Chair thanked the Audit Commission representative for the Audit Commission letter and her comments.

Resolved that the Committee notes the Audit Commission's report and asked that the Annual Audit Letter 2008/09 is placed on the County Council's website.

6. Audit and Standards Work Programme

Resolved, having considered report of the Strategic Director of Customers, Workforce and Governance, to –

- (1) note the Committee's latest work programme;
- (2) Add an up date/progress report on Direct Payments to the 14th February 2011 meeting;
- (3) Add Case Management and Members Allowances Scheme to the work programme – dates to be determined.

7. Any Other Business

None

8. Future Meeting Dates

Resolved to note future meeting dates, to be held in Shire Hall, as follows -

- Tuesday 11 May 2010 at 10:00 a.m.
- Thursday 23 September 2010 at 10:00 a.m.
- Tuesday 23 November at 2:00 p.m.
- Thursday 24 February 2011 at 10:00 a.m.

9. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

Resolved that members of the public be excluded from the meeting for items 10 and 11 below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1,2,3 & 7 of the Local Government Act 1972'.

10. Exempt minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2009

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2009 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

11. Compliance with Contract Standing Orders Audit 2009

The committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Customers, Workforce and Governance, which outlined the findings of the 2009/10-contract standing orders compliance audit.

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Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 12.30 p.m.