

**A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
WAS HELD ON 1 FEBRUARY 2007**

Membership:

Councillors Gill (P), Kimber (P), Langdon (P), Smith, Mrs Wright (P) and Wright (P)

Independent Members: Mr M J Heritage-Owen (P)
Mr R V Perry (P)

39. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received on behalf of Councillor Smith.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

41. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Governance Committee held on 14 December 2006 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

42. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

43. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

44. INTERNAL AUDIT – PROGRESS REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Internal Audit and Risk Assurance concerning the performance of the Internal Audit Section for the nine months from 1 April to 31 December 2006 against the agreed audit plan. The position statement highlighted the workload since the last report to the Committee on 14 December 2006 and it was reported that from the results to date the target of completing forty-two reports by 31 March 2007 was achievable.

The report provided an independent internal audit opinion on the overall control environment of the areas reviewed within a brief executive summary. Members were also provided with a table of critical and essential internal audit recommendations, together with Managers comments, responsible officers and target implementation dates from the reviews undertaken this year. In addition, the Committee were provided with the important and advisory internal audit recommendations agreed with management.

In answer to Members' questions, the Financial Services Manager clarified aspects of budgetary control and capital expenditure and informed the Committee of financial awareness training that was in place and further anticipated training. The Deputy Chief Executive & Borough Treasurer advised the Committee of comments by the External Auditors on budgetary issues which the auditors considered to be robust and satisfactory. Any high risks matters would be reported to the relevant Service Board(s) of the Council.

RESOLVED: That

- (a) the performance of the Internal Audit Section from 1 April to 31 December 2006 be noted;
- (b) the independent audit opinion, by the Head of Internal Audit and Risk Assurance, on the level of assurance related to the control environment be noted; and
- (c) the schedule of the internal audit recommendations reported in both the critical and essential recommendations be noted.

45. USE OF RESOURCES - UPDATE

The Deputy Chief Executive & Borough Treasurer presented a report informing the Committee of the progress being made with the action plan for improvement of the Council's Use of Resources score. A copy of the Action Plan, which identified responsible officers, was tabled at the meeting.

Members were informed that all actions required to be completed by the end of January 2007 had proceeded satisfactorily and that work on some of the tasks due by March had already commenced.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Deputy Chief Executive & Borough Treasurer on progress being made to improve the Council's Use of Resources score be noted.

46. WORK AREAS FOR THE COMMITTEE – 2006/2007

Consideration was given to the proposed work areas for the Committee. A revised timetable of key dates and for the presentation of reports to Committee was tabled at the meeting.

The Borough Solicitor & Monitoring Officer informed Members that a draft for consultation on a revised Model Code of Conduct had recently been received and, as a consequence of the proposals, a report on Member/Officer Protocol would be presented to the Committee in April. Additionally, the CIPFA Guidance document had only recently become available and it would be necessary to work with all service units of the Council with this guidance to complete the review of Contract Standing Orders. Other areas of the work programme might also be affected by the guidance referred to in the Code of Conduct and the CIPFA documents.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the amendments highlighted by the Borough Solicitor & Monitoring Officer, the revised work programme for the Committee be approved.

47. ANY OTHER ITEMS

There were no other items for the Committee to consider under special circumstances regulations.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and concluded at 6.35pm

CHAIRMAN