

A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

WAS HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2007

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

Independent Members: Mr R V Perry (P), vacancy.

It was reported that, in accordance with Standing Orders, notice had been received that Councillor Hook would replace Councillor Kimber for this meeting.

25. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillors Kimber and Smith.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

27. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Governance Committee held on 1 November 2007 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

28. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

29. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

30. WORK AREAS FOR THE COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to a joint report of the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer and Head of Internal Audit and Risk Assurance (a copy of which is attached in the Minute Book at Appendix 'A') which advised the Committee on the direction of Governance work for the 2007/2008 Municipal Year.

Members were advised that the work programme should be a standing item on the agenda for the Committee as other areas of work may need to be included as changes and developments occurred. For example, there were expected to be changes to the Code of Conduct during 2008 which would need consideration.

RESOLVED: That:-

- i. the work programme set out in Section 2 of the report of the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer and Head of Internal Audit and Risk Assurance be approved; and
- ii. the work programme should be a standing item on the agenda for future meetings of the Committee.

31. INTERNAL AUDIT – PROPOSED INFORMAL PARTNERSHIP WITH EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL FROM 1 APRIL 2008

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Internal Audit and Risk Assurance (a copy of which is attached in the Minute Book at Appendix 'B') which advised the Committee on the proposed informal partnership of Internal Audit and its sharing of resources with Eastleigh Borough Council as from 1 April 2008.

The Head of Internal Audit and Risk Assurance stressed to Members that the partnership would initially be on an informal basis in order that any problems identified could be solved before entering into a formal contract. The number of days agreed to be transferred as outlined in paragraph 2.1 of the report was based on a worst case scenario and therefore the actual number of days could be less. Members were also advised that, should Eastleigh require additional assistance, it had been agreed that this would be bought in from an external source. It was recognised that any changes in staff within the Gosport Audit Team could impact on the delivery of the partnership. However, Members were assured that the staffing level was stable at the current time and the partnership arrangement afforded Gosport staff the opportunity for career development which it was anticipated would assist in staff retention.

Members expressed concern at any reduction in audit time spent in assisting the Housing Department. They were advised that 105 days were assigned in 2007/08 and this figure would be increased to 119½ days in 2008/09. Improved controls and audit systems had been put in place within the Housing Department and it was anticipated that the number of days assigned would be adequate to prevent the repetition of recent problems within that Department.

The Head of Internal Audit and Risk Assurance confirmed to Members that the Strategic Plan outlined at Appendix 2 of the report would evolve in accordance with Corporate Governance issues and in response to issues identified during ongoing consultations with Chief Officers. The roles of other officers within the Borough were being developed to incorporate responsibility for certain functions previously carried out by Audit, as outlined in paragraph 2.5 of the report.

Paragraph 2.4 of the report stated that an agreed proportion of the 2008/09 income would be made available to buy in support for progressing governance

issues. It was confirmed that an amount of £20,000 would be allocated for the purchase of additional support if required. It was suggested that an amendment be made to the recommendation in the report to include reference to the purchase of additional support for governance and housing issues.

RESOLVED: That:

- i. approval in principle be given to the proposed joint internal audit arrangements with Eastleigh Borough Council as from 1 April 2008; and
- ii. approval be given to the buying in of audit support if required for the progression of governance issues and the meeting of housing needs.

32. CLOSING REMARKS

The Chairman thanked Members for their support during the year and wished them a Happy Christmas.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and concluded at 6.40pm.

CHAIRMAN