

AUDIT COMMITTEE

6.00 P.M.

23RD APRIL 2008

PRESENT:- Councillors Janice Hanson (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Jon Barry, Roger Dennison, Tony Johnson, Geoff Knight and Karen Leytham

Council Members attending for Minutes 35 and 36:-

Councillors Tina Clifford and Sarah Fishwick

Apologies for Absence:-

Malcolm Thomas

Officers in attendance:-

Jane Alder	Head of Information and Customer Services (part)
Nadine Muschamp	Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Stephen Metcalfe	Principal Democratic Support Officer
Derek Whiteway	Internal Audit Manager

Also in attendance:-

Jerry White	Local Government Ombudsman (part)
Mike Thomas and Mike Tye	Audit Commission (part)

32 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January, 2008 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

33 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no items of urgent business authorised by the Chairman.

34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

35 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL LETTER

Mr. Jerry White, Local Government Ombudsman, was in attendance at the meeting and gave an informative presentation on the work of the Ombudsman. He provided a brief synopsis of the Ombudsman complaints that the authority had received in 2006/07, including the outcome and learning points from these. The Ombudsman also highlighted the 2007/08 provisional figures.

Members then considered the report of the Head of Information and Customer Services that provided a detailed summary of those complaints for which the City Council received a decision from the Local Government Ombudsman in 2006/07, as requested by Members at their meeting held on 19th September 2007 (minute 13 refers).

Resolved:

- (1) That Mr Jerry White, Local Government Ombudsman be thanked for his attendance and informative presentation to the Committee.
- (2) That the details contained within the report be noted.

Note: All Members of Council had been invited to attend this item.

36 ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER

Mr. Mike Thomas and Mr. Mike Tye (Audit Commission) introduced the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter. The report assessed the progress that the City Council had made in the past 12 months.

It was reported that following a recent corporate assessment the Council had now been assessed as 'Good'. Members were advised that, overall, the majority of City Council services were improving. Further work was still required in some areas including the VFM improvement agenda, further development on equality and diversity and working with partners to develop a strategic and operational approach to the reduction of health inequalities in the Lancaster area.

Resolved:

- (1) That Mr. Mike Thomas and Mr. Mike Tye be thanked for their attendance at this and previous meetings of the Committee.
- (2) That the report be noted.

Note: All Members of Council had been invited to attend this item.

37 INTERNAL AUDIT MONITORING

The Internal Audit Manager presented a report which advised Members of the latest monitoring position regarding the 2007/08 Internal Audit Plan.

Resolved:

- (1) That the current monitoring position be noted.

38 RESULTS OF INTERNAL AUDIT WORK

The Internal Audit Manager introduced a report that informed the Committee of the results of Internal Audit work for the period.

It was noted that there was limited assurance with regard to Housing Advances and VAT. Work was ongoing in these areas to improve the level of assurance.

At the meeting the issue of VAT fraud was raised and Members requested a report back on this, particularly the possibility of VAT number checks and how this could be integrated into the Council's financial systems and procedures.

Resolved:

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That a report be submitted to the Committee upon VAT number checking and how this could be integrated into the Council's financial systems and procedures.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.45 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Stephen Metcalfe, Democratic Services - telephone (01524) 582073 or email
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