

Cherwell District Council

Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 15 June 2011 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Tony Ilott (Chairman)
Councillor Trevor Stevens (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Andrew Beere
Councillor Colin Clarke
Councillor Mike Kerford-Byrnes
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Rose Stratford

Also Present: Katherine Bennett, Manager, Assurance, Government and Public Services, PricewaterhouseCoopers
Neil Mohan, Senior Counter-Fraud Specialist, PricewaterhouseCoopers

Apologies for absence: Councillor Barry Wood

Officers: Karen Curtin, Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer
Jessica Lacey, Technical Accountant
Jeff Brawley, Investigations Manager
Natasha Clark, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

5 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

6 Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 14 March 2011 and 18 May 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

7 Fraud Awareness

Cherwell District Council's Investigations Manager and the Senior Counter-Fraud Specialist, PricewaterhouseCoopers (the Council's internal auditor) gave a presentation on corporate fraud. The presentation provided an overview of fraud in the public sector and action that was being taken nationally and locally to address this.

The Committee was advised that the Bribery Act 2010 gained Royal assent on 8 April 2010 and created a corporate offence of failure to prevent bribery, and required the Council to implement adequate procedures to prevent bribery. The Act would come into force from 1 July 2011. The Investigations Manager presented the draft Anti-Bribery Policy which would contribute to the Council fulfilling this requirement and limit the Council's risk of exposure to bribery.

In response to Members' questions, the Investigations Manager explained that the Council's Anti-Bribery Policy would apply to officers, elected Members and stakeholders.

The Committee agreed that the Anti-Bribery Policy should be admitted as an urgent item to the 22 June 2011 Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee agenda to enable the final version of the policy to be endorsed before the Bribery Act 2010 enters into force on 1 July 2011.

8 Review of Statutory Accounts 2010/11

The Head of Finance submitted the Draft Financial Statements 2010/11 (Subject to Audit) for the Committee's consideration. The Chairman advised the Committee that this was an opportunity for Members to examine the draft Financial Statements in detail and question Officers on the content.

The Head of Finance reminded Members that under new regulations the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee had responsibility responsible for reviewing the annual Statement of Accounts, but it does not have to formally approve them. This responsibility had been delegated to the responsible financial officer. The responsible financial officer at Cherwell District Council is the Section 151 Officer (Head of Finance).

During the course of the review Members of the Committee made 17 observations including questions and comments which were duly responded to by Finance Officers. The Chairman invited Members to contact the Finance Team with any further questions or comments they may have.

The Head of Finance advised the Committee that the a briefing note outlining the review process of the draft Financial Statements 2010/11 (Subject to Audit) would be circulated to Members together with a summary of the amendments made ahead of the Committee's 22 June 2010 meeting at which the Head of Finance would provide a verbal update.

The Committee thanked all staff in the Closedown Team for their hard work in preparing the Draft Financial Statements 2010/11 and responding to all of their comments and questions.

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm

Chairman:

Date: