

Minutes

Corporate Services and Partnerships
Policy Overview Committee
Thursday 10 November 2011
Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic
Centre, High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p>Members Present: Councillors Richard Lewis (Chairman), Jazz Dhillon, Neil Fyfe, Raymond Graham, Shirley Harper-O'Neill, Richard Mills, Robin Sansarpuri and Michael White.</p> <p>Apologies: Councillor Beulah East (Councillor Jazz Dhillon substituting).</p> <p>Officers: Helen Taylor (Head of Audit & Enforcement) and Khalid Ahmed (Democratic Services Manager).</p> <p>Witnesses Ian Luder (Independent Member of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea's Audit Committee and Vice-Chairman of the City of London's Audit and Risk Management Committee) and John Morley (Chairman of the Audit Committee LBH).</p>
33.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>Councillors Raymond Graham and Richard Lewis declared Personal Interests In Agenda Item 5 – First Major Review – Effectiveness of the Audit Committee and its Terms of Reference as they were both Members of the Audit Committee. They both remained in the room and took part in discussions.</p>
34.	<p>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2011</p> <p>Agreed as an accurate record.</p>
35.	<p>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <p>It was agreed that all items of business were considered in public.</p>
36.	<p>FIRST MAJOR REVIEW – EFFECTIVENESS OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE AND ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE – WITNESS SESSION</p> <p>Evidence was received from Ian Luder, Independent Member of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea's Audit Committee and Vice-Chairman of the City of London's Audit and Risk Management Committee and John Morley, the Chairman of this Council's Audit Committee.</p> <p>Issues raised included:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kensington & Chelsea's Audit Committee consisted of 4 Council Members and 3 Independent Members • The 3 Independent Members did not have the same terms of office which provided continuity and experience • It was important for Independent Members to have a good understanding of the workings of an Authority. At Kensington & Chelsea (K & C) copies of agenda, including Cabinet agenda were sent out to Independent Members of the Audit Committee • There should be provision within the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference for Members to commission reports • Audit Committees should have effective means of challenge • Summaries of Internal Audit reports were seen by K & C's Audit Committee. However, if there were high risk / unsatisfactory assurance levels received, Members would expect to see full reports • The Audit Committee had the authority to invite the relevant Cabinet Member to the Committee if unsatisfactory assurance levels were received and if there was conflict between the Head of Audit and the department, both the relevant Cabinet Member and office holder would be invited to attend the Audit Committee • The skills required for Audit Committee Members included business acumen, audit governance, IT, Internal Controls and accountancy. A skills audit should take place on those Members elected to an Audit Committee • At K & C, Independent Members could not be residents of the Royal Borough or have been a Member or officer of the Council in the previous 5 years. This requirement would perhaps not work for all Local Authorities • The terms of office of Members were staggered to ensure that the expertise and knowledge of the membership would not be lost with local elections and the possibility of Members losing their seats on the Council • The training of Audit Committee Members was important to ensure the skills and knowledge base was good to enable Members to carry out their duties effectively • At the City of London Authority interviews would be taking place shortly for another Independent Member, and Members of the Audit Committee would be interviewing candidates • Reference was made to getting the balance right in terms of training and providing briefings for Independent Members, to ensure they remained impartial and not part of the Authority • Reference was made to the Department for 	<p>Action by:</p>
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	<p>Communities and Local Government consultation on the Future of Local Audit and the proposal for Audit Committees to have more than one Independent Member</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An appropriate membership of Audit Committee would be 7-9 Members • A positive development could be a Pan-London network of Chairmen of Audit Committees which would enable an exchange of views and best practise to be discussed. Such an idea could be discussed with London Councils • With regard to Risk Management, K & C's Audit Committee looked at two strategic risks with the risk holder at each meeting • A possible option for the membership of Audit Committees could be rotation of Members on Cabinet and on the Audit Committee or just a general rotation of a Group of Members. This would increase the skills and knowledge base and would provide a diversity of Member views • Reference was made to elections which take place in Hillingdon every four years which potentially could mean that a number of experienced Members could lose their seats. Increasing the knowledge base with a number of Members could mitigate this <p>Members thanked Ian Luder and John Morley for attending the meeting and for helping the Committee with their review.</p> <p>RESOLVED -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the information provided as part of the witness session be noted and a draft of this Committee's final report be submitted to a meeting of the Committee in December. 	Action By:
37.	<p>CONSIDERATION OF TOPICS FOR THE COMMITTEE'S SECOND MAJOR REVIEW</p> <p>Discussion took place regarding this Committee's second review topic of the year.</p> <p>The Chairman reported that both the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Improvement, Partnerships and Community Safety had endorsed the Committee's proposed second review topic into the operation and function of the Hillingdon First Card.</p> <p>Members were informed that a review could look at other potential uses of the card such as further discounts for local shops and businesses, possible discount structures with national organisations and public utilities and the possible use</p>	

	<p>of the card for business to business discounts.</p> <p>Members noted that any review recommendations which involved any enhancements / additions to the card, would have to be at no extra cost to the Council and involve no additional costs to the administration of the Hillingdon First Card. In addition, any possible enhancements / additions should not involve any cash handling as experience had shown that the security and financial implications of this often outweighed the gain.</p> <p>RESOLVED -</p> <p>1. That approval be given to the Committee undertaking a review on the operation and function of the Hillingdon First Card and a draft scoping report and a background report be submitted to this Committee in January 2012.</p>	<p>Action By:</p> <p>Khalid Ahmed</p>
38.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME</p> <p>Discussion took place on this Committee's work programme for the remainder of this Municipal Year.</p> <p>After discussion it was agreed that presentation / briefing reports be added to this Committee's work programme for its meetings in January and February 2012 on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work of the Corporate Fraud Team (January) • The work of the Enforcement Team (February) • Reported heating problems within the Civic Centre (February) <p>RESOLVED -</p> <p>1. That the report and updates be noted.</p>	<p>Garry Coote / Helen Taylor / Steve Smith / Khalid Ahmed</p>
39.	<p>CABINET FORWARD PLAN</p> <p>Noted.</p>	
	<p>Meeting closed at 6.45pm Next meeting: 19 December 2011 at 6.00pm (to be confirmed)</p>	

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Khalid Ahmed on 01895 250833. These minutes are circulated to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.