

## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday 22 March 2004

### PRESENT:

Councillor WARNER (Chairman), Councillor SKILTON (Deputy Chairman) and Councillors LEGGETT, Mrs MURRAY, Mrs POOLEY, SLATER (as substitute for Marsh) and STEVENS (as substitute for Lacey).

**19. MINUTES.** The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2003 were submitted and approved and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

**20. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2004 TO 2005.** The Committee considered the report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services regarding Internal Audit activity planned for 2004 to 2005. Members were advised that the contents of the Plan might be subject to variation over the year as different priorities emerged and current management issues were resolved. The changes may include the number of days allocated to individual reviews and work on an area not included in the plan, which had been identified as having a higher risk, and therefore should be subject to audit appraisal. The Head of Audit reported that the structure of the new Corporate Services Division was being finalised and that although changes to job descriptions may necessitate an internal recruitment process, it was anticipated that there were sufficient staff levels to complete the work within the plan.

The Plan covered audits relating to the Council's key financial and computer systems and contracts. In addition, routine audits would be undertaken on a rolling cyclical programme, with the frequency of review determined by an assessment of risk and were designed to ensure the proper administration of the Council. Other areas covered by the Plan related to Risk Management, special investigations and Equality Issues. Through the risk management process, the Council had identified the "Top 14" risks that created the greatest threat to the Council's Priorities and Values. The Head of Audit would be responsible for developing a response to one of the risks, which related to the absence of any business continuity and disaster recovery plans. The project would be complementary to the existing Emergency Plan and would outline arrangements for maintaining normal day-to-day service during a major incident.

**RESOLVED:** That the Internal Audit Plan as set out in appendix A to the report be approved.

**21. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL'S WHEELED BIN REFUSE COLLECTION SERVICE AND RECYCLING SERVICE.** The Committee considered the report of the Review Group on the outcome of the review of the wheeled bin and recycling box implementation programme, which took place between February 2003 and November 2003. Councillor Elkin introduced the report and thanked Officers, in particular Mark Probyn and Katie Armstrong for their work in assisting the review process. It had been both a vigorous and balanced review and had produced a number of learning points and recommendations for submission to Cabinet. Councillor Skilton reported that the implementation was very successful and was due to the excellent work undertaken by staff from the Council and SITA (UK) Ltd.

The scope and topics for inclusion as part of the Review had been agreed in October 2003 following the appointment of Councillors Skilton and Elkin to the Review Group.

The Review had been carried out in accordance with the report adopted by the Scrutiny Committee on 9 July 2003 entitled "Effective Scrutinising". Interviews had been conducted over two and a half days in January and February and witnesses had been called from the Project Management Board, the Project Management Team and representatives from both Residents Groups and the Voluntary Sector. Written responses were also requested from a representative of Otto (UK) Ltd, who supplied and delivered the wheeled bins and the Editor of the Eastbourne Herald. A notice was published in the Eastbourne Herald on 12 December 2003 advising of the review and inviting residents to contribute their views. A link was also placed on the Council's website to

enable residents to e-mail their views. A detailed overview of the implementation of the new refuse collection contract, the correspondence received and results of the interviews had been circulated.

The Review Group had acknowledged the scale and complexity of the project, which had affected every household in the Borough, and the difficulties involved with implementing a change of service for some 37,500 households.

Tribute was paid to the work and commitment of the Cleansing Group and SITA who had dealt with a significant amount of correspondence and telephone calls. At its peak, calls to the Council's Cleansing Group and SITA during one month had increased to 8,000 and 22,000 respectively. Over six thousand letters had been received through the implementation period, each requiring an appropriate response. The contribution of individual staff members from other services areas was also acknowledged.

Communication throughout the project was found to be effective and had taken the form of direct mail, mail and telephone responses, public meetings, surgery and personal visit. This view had been expressed by residents at a Forum who indicated that they had been kept fully informed at every stage in the development and implementation of the project. It was acknowledged that residents of flats could have been contacted directly regarding the options available for their individual premises in terms of storage and collection arrangements.

It was accepted that some aspects could have been improved with additional resources, with particular reference to the overload experienced on both telephone systems during peak times. The Head of Amenities reported that an integrated database had now been set up to assist in monitoring the refuse collection and street cleansing contracts which would be reviewed at the end of March 2004 to check that it was meeting the Council's and SITA's requirements.

The Members of the Project Management Board and Project Management Team had worked throughout the Review to resolve complaints, deal effectively with difficulties encountered and provide effective management to ensure the successful implementation of the project.

The difficulties for the Contractor were recognised and the Review Group concluded that SITA had worked hard throughout the phased implementation to bring in the new services effectively and efficiently and to improve the cleanliness of the Borough. It was acknowledged that some residents did experience difficulties with their collection arrangements during this period. By the time of implementation in early November, the greater numbers of residents were receiving a satisfactory service.

There had been a significant increase in recycling activity since the implementation and the Council was well placed to reaching its statutory target of 18% during 2005/06.

The Review Group had considered the disposal of garden waste and acknowledged the significant cost implications of collection and disposal to a composting facility. The continuation of the free green waste sack scheme available to senior citizens was supported until a suitable alternative could be provided. It was understood from the Residents Forum that residents did not wish to pay for the additional service and that it should be provided through Council Tax. Home composting had been acknowledged as an option. It was considered that, as many households did not require this service, any scheme should be based on a charge to the user. It was noted that the Council's 10-year waste strategy required a report to Cabinet on the potential for the disposal of green waste to composting by no later than September 2004. The Head of Amenities reported on an unsuccessful bid for funds to DEFRA to assist with recycling of green waste and an indication of the reasons for this had been requested from DEFRA.

The Committee discussed the development of its curtilage recycling service for the collection of plastics and cardboard. It was acknowledged that plastic was problematic to recycle owing to the number of different types, some of which could not be reprocessed. It was also difficult to make recycling of plastic economically viable. An option was the provision of suitable containers within the Council's "bring sites", and this would be investigated with East Sussex County Council and their Contractor.

A further issue highlighted was the problem for the disabled, particularly those with impaired vision if residents left bins on the highway. The Cleansing Contracts Manager would continue work on this issue and it was noted that following a collection, a number of streets were visited to ascertain the extent of the problem. To date, six

wheeled bins had been removed from residents who had refused to take them onto their property.

The Committee thanked Councillors Elkin and Skilton for their work during the Review, and supported the recommended learning and action points set out in the report.

**RESOLVED:** (1) That the contents of the report be noted.

(2) That the effectiveness of the Project Management Board and Project Management Team in delivering its objectives be acknowledged.

(3) That the excellent contribution made by residents of the Borough in ensuring the success of the implementation of the wheeled bin collection service and the significant increase in recycling now undertaken be acknowledged.

(4) That the learning points as set out in the report be acknowledged.

(5) That Cabinet be recommended to agree the action points proposed by the Review Group.

The meeting closed at 7.15 p.m.

**P WARNER**

**Chairman**