

Scrutiny Committee

MEMBERSHIP:-

Councillors MARSH (Deputy Chairman), Councillors Mrs BANNISTER, BELSEY, LACEY, SLATER (as substitute for Healy) TAYLOR and WARNER.

(An apology for absence was reported from Councillor Mrs Healy)

1 Internal Audit Services – Review of Activities and Performance 2004-05.

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Internal Auditor providing a summary of the activities and performance of Internal Audit for the financial year 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005; provides a statement on the Council's financial internal control and provides an update on the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

The report detailed the routine, computer and contract audits and financial system reviews. Members were advised that 85 days had been spent carrying out special investigations, which was much higher than the allowance of 45 days in the original plan. The Audit Plan for the second half of 2004-05 was revised and an allowance of 21 days had made for special investigation; this was in line with the number of days used in the first half of the year. However during this period almost 65 days were spent, mainly on one particular investigation which has continued to use Audit resources in 2005-06.

The report also detailed actual audit coverage across Council departments. Some weaknesses were identified during reviews of the major financial systems, however Internal Audit was working closely with Service Managers to address these issues. Good progress had been made and outstanding issues were expected to be resolved shortly.

A review of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance was currently being undertaken. Consideration was being given to including the Code within the Constitution. On completion of the review a report would be submitted to Scrutiny.

Noted.

2 Statement of Internal Control.

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services consulting members on the Draft Statement of Internal Control.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 introduced a new requirement for local authorities to include a Statement on Internal Control (SIC) as part of the Annual Statement of Accounts. The new requirement first applied for the 2003/04 accounts on a transitional basis. For 2004/05 the SIC had to conform to a detailed specification. The scope of the SIC covered the broad range of the Council's corporate governance arrangements, including:

- Arrangements for establishing corporate objectives and priorities
- Risk identification and management
- Identification and evaluation of key controls.

Councils were required to undertake an evaluation of these arrangements and report in the SIC on gaps/weaknesses and plans for improvement.

CIPFA had produced a model for gathering the evidence which the Audit Commission would use in evaluating the statement. This model had been completed by Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Assistant Director – Strategy and Democracy, Assistant Director – Corporate Services, Head of Legal Services, Financial Strategy Accountant and used to generate the light improvement actions that were set out in the report. These improvement actions also addressed a number of requirements of the new Use of Resources CPA guidance (Audit Committees, documented procedures, formal legal clearance of reports).

Members were asked to consider the Statement and Improvement actions. The final version would be incorporated into the Statement of Accounts for approval by Cabinet and Council in July.

Noted.

3 Review of the Scrutiny Process 2001-2005.

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director – Strategy and Democracy and Scrutiny Co-Ordinator providing Members with information regarding the development of the Scrutiny function over the past four years, since April 2001, and suggesting ways of developing the service in future.

The aim of the report was to provide a factual review the items that had been discussed by the Committee over the past four years. With particular attention to the reviews conducted. The report also highlighted the need to increase the profile of the Scrutiny function within Eastbourne, not only following the CPA inspection in March 2004 but also as part of the Council Plan. Members agreed that research be undertaken with those authorities receiving an 'excellent' CPA rating to ascertain how those authorities have developed their Scrutiny function.

The ways in which the profile could be increased are detailed within the report, and included the importance of careful selection of topics for review, ensuring that attention is paid to public priorities and areas of local concern.

It was essential that greater public participation was sought, using the Council's website, local press, inviting witnesses to participate, and conducting forums outside of the Town Hall. The production of an Annual report detailing the reviews conducted, their objectives and outcomes, would assist in the promotion of the Scrutiny function. It could also provide advance notice of topics for review in the forthcoming year.

The provision of additional training for Members was recognised as an important part of increasing the value of Scrutiny within the Council. The Assistant Director – Strategy and Democracy advised the Committee that the Council had now received the IIP standard for Member training, following the recent re accreditation process.

Members agreed that there was greater potential for scrutinising external organisations, as well as better selection of topics that were areas of public concern.

Resolved: (1) (By 4 votes to 2) That the Committee supports the submission of a growth bid of £3000 in the 2006/07 budget for the effective conduct of scrutiny reviews.

(2) That in respect of Scrutiny Reviews earmarked for 2005/06, any identified need for funding support be considered by the Council and made available from within existing budgetary constraints if possible.

(3) That a monitoring report for each of the four reviews that have been carried out be included in the annual programme for 2005/06.

(4) That an Annual report be produced detailing the work of the Committee, the reviews conducted, the outcomes of each review and the work programme for the forthcoming year.

(5) That the Scrutiny Co-ordinator be requested to undertake research into those authorities receiving an CPA 'excellent' rating to ascertain how those authorities have developed their Scrutiny function.

4 Scrutiny Annual Programme.

Members were requested to approve the attached draft Annual Scrutiny Programme. The final programme is due to be approved by Council on 27 July 2005, following consultation with Cabinet.

The Committee considered the addition of a 'Coaching Industry' Task Group arising from Brighton University research, the scope and details of which are included within the Annual Programme. A copy of the amended Annual Programme is appended to these minutes. Councillors appointed to Task Groups were as follows;

Value of Airbourne - Councillor Belsey and 1 Lib Dem

Coaching Industry – Councillor Taylor and 1 Lib Dem

Audit Task Group – Councillor Lacey and 1 Lib Dem

All outstanding nominations would be forwarded to the Scrutiny Co-Ordinator by Friday 15 July 2005.

Resolved: (1) That subject to the addition of a ‘Coaching Industry’ Task Group, the content of the Annual Programme be agreed.

(2) That the outline timetable for the Annual Programme be agreed.

(3) That all outstanding nominations for Task Groups be forwarded to the Scrutiny Co-Ordinator by Friday 15 July 2005.

The meeting finished at 7.15 p.m.

Councillor Marsh

Deputy Chairman in the Chair

Date	Item	Type	Lead Officer	Councillor	Purpose
5 July 2005					
	Internal Audit 2004/2005	Performance Review	Janet Martin	None	Summary of activities and performance of Internal Audit 2004/05
	Statement of Internal Control	Policy Formulation	Sue McHugh	None	Consultation on draft Statement of Internal Control
	Scrutiny Process 2001 / 2005	Investigation report	Katie Armstrong / Peter Finnis	None	Update on the development of the Scrutiny function over the last four years and suggested improvements

	Annual Scrutiny Programme				To agree annual programme for forth coming year
	Value of Airbourne	Performance Review	Keith Morrison	(Cllrs Belsey and 1 Lib Dem)	Review to establish the true value of Airbourne to both the Town and Eastbourne Borough Council including research on how the event is perceived Agreed in 04/05 Annual Programme
	Coaching Industry	Performance Review	Keith Morrison	(Cllrs Taylor and 1 Lib Dem)	Arising from Brighton University research – To analyse long term facilities for coaches and drivers (over the next 20 yrs), promotional ideas and the development of economic opportunities

Date	Item	Type	Lead Officer	Councillor	Purpose
5 September 2005					

	Best Value Performance Indicators	Performance Review	Stuart Russell	None	To examine BVPIs raised by Members (if any). Members will receive BVPIs four weeks prior to Committee; Members are requested to inform Scrutiny Co-ordinator of any further information required on any BVPI at pre agenda, so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
	Medium Term Financial Strategy And Corporate Plan	Information Report	Sue McHugh	Councillor Lucas	
	Gypsies And Travellers	Policy Formulation	Martin Freeman		Update on the development of Gypsies and Travellers Policy
	'One Stop Shop' specifically Telephones	Investigation Report		Jo Byers / Sue McHugh	Report highlighting current problems to include suggested recommendations for improvement

	Formulation of standing Audit Task Group		J Martin / S McHugh	Cllrs Lacey and 1 Lib Dem) + co-opts	
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Date	Item	Type	Lead Officer	Councillor	Purpose
7 November 2005					
	Audit	Performance Review	Janet Martin	None	
	Back Alleys	Performance Review	Paul Quanstrom / Mark Probyn	To set up two Member Task Group	Review within central Eastbourne to establish who has ownership of, and is accountable for back alleyways, and to produce a leaflet informing residents. Agreed in 04/05 Annual Programme
	Disabled Access Task Group	Task Group	Mike Merchant	Councillors Mrs Howlett and Marsh	Task Group review report on findings

Date	Item	Type	Lead Officer	Councillor	Purpose
5 December 2005					

	Best Value Performance Indicators	Performance Review	Stuart Russell	None	To examine BVPIs raised by Members (if any). Members will receive BVPIs four weeks prior to Committee; Members are requested to inform Scrutiny Co-ordinator of any further information required on any BVPI at pre agenda, so that appropriate arrangements can be made
	Race Equality Scheme	Policy Formulation	Monica Elsen	None	
	Review of Corporate Governance	Policy formulation	Janet Martin	None	

Date	Item	Type	Lead Officer	Councillor	Purpose
6 February 2006					
	Budget 2006/07	Policy Formulation	S McHugh	Councillor Lucas	

	Enforcement Procedures	Performance Review	Paul Quanstrom	Cllrs Taylor and 1 Lib Dem)	Review the effectiveness of the process taking evidence from internal and external sources Agreed in 04/05 Annual Programme
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Date	Item	Type	Lead Officer	Councillor	Purpose
20 March 2006					
	Best Value Performance Indicators	Performance Review	Stuart Russell	None	To examine BVPIs raised by Members (if any). Members will receive BVPIs four weeks prior to Committee; Members are requested to inform Scrutiny Co-ordinator of any further information required on any BVPI at pre agenda, so that appropriate arrangements can be made
	Audit	Performance Review	Janet Martin	None	

No Date					
	Taxi and Private Hire Task Group	Performance Monitoring	Paul Quanstrom		To monitor the progress of the recommendations arising from the Taxi and Private Hire review.
	Elections and Voter Turnout Task Group	Performance Monitoring	Peter Finnis / Tracey Pannett		To monitor the progress of the recommendations arising from the Elections and Voter Turnout review.
	Wheeled Bin Collections	Performance Monitoring	Mark Probyn		To monitor the progress of the recommendations arising from the Wheeled Bin Collections review.
	Abandoned Vehicles	Performance Monitoring	Mark Probyn		To monitor the progress of the recommendations arising from the Abandoned Vehicles review.

	Licensing agreed 04/05 Annual Programme	Investigation			Audit review to be conducted in last qtr, to report after Christmas,
	Consultancy funding for the procurement of Theatres, Leisure Services and Seafront Attractions agreed February 2005	Information report to be circulated outside of committee			Details on how consultants are selected and the costs involved.
	Leisure Contract			Councillor Stanley	Discuss with Councillor Stanley

	Recruitment and Retention	Investigation	Caroline Freeman		Departmental investigation into the current use of financial resources in respect of temporary / agency staff –
	Review of the implementatio n of the new benefit fraud policy agreed by Cabinet	Policy Formulation	Sue McHugh		

