
Audit and Governance Committee

29 June 2009

Report of the Director of Resources

Audit & Governance Committee Forward Plan 2009

Summary

1. This paper presents the future plan of reports expected to be presented to the Committee during 2009/10 together with proposals to increase the number of meetings following a members' self-assessment session against CIPFA best practice guidance for Audit Committees.

Background

2. There are currently four fixed meetings of the Committee in a calendar year. To assist members in their work, attached at Annex 1 is the indicative rolling Forward Plan for the next two scheduled meetings in 2009/10 (September 2009 and January 2010). The content is subject to change depending on key internal control and governance developments at the time; a rolling Forward Plan of the Committee will be reported at every meeting reflecting any known changes. The plan will also include known training/briefing events to support members in their role on the Committee.
3. On 19th May 2009, members of the Committee attended a self-assessment session during which there was facilitated discussion around compliance with best practice standards for audit committees (CIPFA's 'Audit Committees - Practical Guidance for Local Authorities'). One matter raised was around the question 'Does the Committee meet regularly?'. Members raised concerns around the frequency of meetings and the large number of agenda items at each meeting particularly where there are significant and important matters to consider. They were particularly concerned about the length of the agenda for the 29 June 2009 meeting when the Statement of Accounts is due to be presented for the Committee's approval. The general feeling was that increasing the number of meetings to say six per year would greatly assist the Committee with its workload and allow full and effective consideration where significant items were to be presented for comment and approval.
4. The proposals therefore are as follows for the forthcoming period to the end of July 2010:
 - Meet as scheduled in **September 2009**;
 - Provide an extra meeting in early **December 2009** to assist in considering the outcomes of the first Comprehensive Area

Assessment (CAA) inspection process (to be reported in November 2009) ;

- Defer the scheduled January 2010 meeting until **February 2010**.
- Next meetings would be:
April 2010 which would allow for early consideration of a draft Annual Governance Statement
June 2010 which be dedicated to the Statement of Accounts and any associated reports feeding into the Annual Governance Statement
July 2011 to consider all other reports which would previously have been considered at the June Committee.

5. These changes would take the number of Audit & Governance Committees to six a year.

Consultation

6. Members who attended the self-assessment session in May initiated the proposals outlined in this report. The Officer Governance Group including the Head of Civic, Democratic & Legal Services have contributed to the report recommendations.

Options

7. Members may either approve the changes or choose to retain the existing timetable of four meetings a year.

Analysis

8. Not relevant for the purpose of the report.

Corporate Priorities

9. This report contributes to the overall effectiveness of the council's governance and assurance arrangements contributing to an 'Effective Organisation'.

Implications

10.
 - (a) **Financial** - There are no implications
 - (b) **Human Resources (HR)** - There are resource implications for Democratic Services who will have to support the extra meetings
 - (c) **Equalities** - There are no implications
 - (d) **Legal** - There are no implications
 - (e) **Crime and Disorder** - There are no implications
 - (f) **Information Technology (IT)** - There are no implications

(g) **Property** - There are no implications

Risk Management

11. By not complying with the requirements of this report, the council will fail to have in place adequate scrutiny of its internal control environment and governance arrangements, it will also fail to properly comply with legislative and best practice requirements, and its Use of Resources score in future CAA assessments could be adversely affected.

Recommendations

12. (a) The Committee's Forward Plan for the period up to January 2010 be noted.

Reason

To ensure the Committee receives regular reports in accordance with the functions of an effective audit committee.

- (b) Members identify any further items they wish to add to the Forward Plan.

Reason

To ensure the Committee can seek assurances on any aspect of the council's internal control environment in accordance with its roles and responsibilities.

- (c) Members agree to increase the number of Committee meetings to six a year in line with the proposals at paragraph 4. of the report.

Reason

To ensure the Committee has time to consider all reports including the opportunity to give full and effective challenge of proposals put before them.

Contact Details

Author:

Pauline Stuchfield
Assistant Director (Customer Service
& Governance)
Telephone: 01904 551706

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Ian Floyd
Director of Resources
Telephone: 01904 551100

Report Approved

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Specialist Implications Officers

Head of Civic, Democratic & Legal Services

Wards Affected: Not applicable

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Audit & Governance Committee Forward Plan 2009/10