

CIVIC AFFAIRS

23 March 2011
6.30 - 8.30 pm

Present: Councillors Boyce (Chair), Rosenstiel (Vice-Chair), Benstead, Herbert, Pitt and Ward

Officers Present:

Chief Executive – Antoinette Jackson
Director of Resources – David Horspool
Head of Internal Audit – Steve Crabtree
Head of Legal Services – Simon Pugh
Head of Planning – Patsy Dell
Democratic Services Manager – Gary Clift
Committee Manager – Martin Whelan

Also present

Representatives of the Audit Commission
Representatives of the Independent Remuneration Panel

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

11/8/civ Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

11/9/civ Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2011 were approved as a true and accurate record.

11/10/civ Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

11/11/civ Public Questions

There were no public questions.

11/12/civ Annual Audit Letter

The committee received the Annual Audit Letter. The Audit Manager presented the letter following an introduction from the Director of Resources.

The committee made the following comments on the letter.

- i. Officers were thanked for their work in light of the very positive feedback contained within the Audit Letter.
- ii. Clarification was requested on whether the recommendations had altered in light of the period of time, which had elapsed since the production of the letter. The Audit Manager advised that the recommendations were still valid, but that minor revisions may be required in the future around responding to the financial challenges recommendation.

Resolved to

- i. Note and receive the annual audit letter

Note the recommendations contained within the letter.

11/13/civ Annual Audit Plan

The committee received the Annual Audit Plan from the Audit Manager. The Audit Manager presented the plan.

The committee made the following comments on the plan

- i. The Director of Resources was asked for a brief explanation regarding the process for selecting the external auditors. The committee were advised that auditors were commonly appointed for 5/6 years to avoid over familiarity, and that it was not expected that the current provision

would change prior to the finalisation of the changes to the Audit Commission.

- ii. The Audit Manager was asked regarding the risk of the IFRS rating dropping from green, and the level of risk associated. The Audit Manager advised that the authority was one of the most advanced in its preparation and it was now largely an issue of implementing the technical decisions already made regarding the preparation of the accounts.
- iii. The Audit Manager was asked whether there were any additional steps that the authority could implement to reduce the audit fee. The committee noted that the Audit Commission and officers worked closely together, and at present there were no significant opportunities to further lower the cost of the audit arrangements.

Resolved to

- i. Note and receive the annual audit plan.

11/14/civ Work programme and scales of fees 2011/12 - Local government, housing and community safety

The committee received the "Work programme and scales of fees 2011/12 - Local government, housing and community safety". The Audit Manager presented the work programme.

The committee made no comments on the work programme.

Resolved to

- i. Note and receive the work programme.

11/15/civ Draft Internal Audit Plan and Strategy 2011/12

The committee received the draft Internal Audit Plan and Strategy 2011/12 from the Head of Internal Audit.

The committee made the following comments on the draft plan and strategy.

- i. Concerns were raised about the governance of partnership arrangements including lack of opposition representation. Potential “drift” in roles in longer partnership arrangements was noted as a further concern. The Head of Internal Audit explained the audit programme would include a focus on partnership agreements and exit strategies.
- ii. The Head of Internal Audit was asked regarding the risks associated with delivering such a comprehensive programme. The committee were advised that 80 days were unallocated to respond to unplanned work and contingencies. The process for altering the work programme was outlined.
- iii. Confirmation was requested on the existing arrangements for informing members of the council of reports containing limited or no assurance recommendations. Following discussion it was agreed that members would be notified when a new report with limited or no assurance was made available. The proposed changes to the audit report format and the overall value of the reports were welcomed by all members of the committee.
- iv. A review of the implementation of the new management arrangements was requested, with particular focus on the need for clarity regarding management responsibilities, which was an issue raised in the folk festival inquiry. The Head of Internal Audit explained the management arrangements would be addressed through an audit of the delegations system.

Resolved to

- i. Approve the plan and strategy

11/16/civ Constitutional Amendments

Executive Councillor responsibilities

The committee received a report regarding the revision of Executive Councillor responsibilities.

Following discussion concerning the lack of explanation in the agenda for the reasons for proposed changes to executive councillor responsibilities, particularly with regard to environmental improvements, and the lack of consideration of scrutiny committee responsibilities, the committee agreed to defer consideration of the proposed changes until its next meeting (16 May). The committee said that the report to the next meeting should address these points

Joint Staff Employer Forum

The Committee was asked to reconsider an earlier decision that the Joint Staff Employer Forum should be open to the public, subject to being able to exclude the press and public if appropriate in view of the subject matter. The Forum's view now was that, as it was an internal forum for staff and their employer (the Council), its meetings should not be open to the public. Staff who were not part of the Forum would be allowed to attend its meetings at the discretion of the Chair.

Resolved to

- i. Recommend to Council that the constitution is amended to reflect that the Joint Staff Employer Forum is not open to the public.

11/17/civ Approval of Joint Memorandum of understanding between Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council on lead officer support to the Cambridge Fringes Joint Development Control Committee

The committee received a report proposing a revised Joint Memorandum of Understanding between Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council on lead officer support to the Cambridge Fringes Joint Development Control Committee. The lead officer role had been carried out by the Joint Planning Director (Growth Areas), but this post would cease to exist from 31 March 2011. The three councils were being asked to agree that the City Council's new Head of Planning Services should take responsibility for managing the co-ordination and delivery of growth in the Cambridge fringe sites.

The Committee welcomed the proposed changes, but concern was expressed about the need for an effective joint member policy forum. It was noted that the "Section 29 Committee" had met and agreed to recommend its abolition. The Head of Planning emphasised that policies would continue to be developed in close co-operation with South Cambridgeshire District Council and the County Council.

Resolved (4 votes to 0) to

- i. Note the contents of the proposed memorandum of understanding
- ii. Recommend to Full Council that the memorandum of understanding is approved by the City Council.

11/18/civ Independent Remuneration Panel - Members Allowances

The committee received a report from the Independent Remuneration Panel regarding members' allowances. Mr Paul a member of the Panel, introduced the Panel's report and drew the committee's attention to some changes (which had been circulated) to the version included in the agenda.

The committee made the following comments

- i. Concern was expressed that the panel didn't fully understand the role of councillors and that would need further support from officers.
- ii. The panel was thanked for their work, but concern was expressed about a number of issues related to process. These issues included a disconnect between the panel and officers supporting the panel, the manner in which the process operates and the lack of transparency in how the allowances are determined. It was further suggested that there should be a detailed review of the interrelationships between the different types of payments.
- iii. The panel clarified the wording of recommendation 2.6 to reflect the proposed payment was not an additional basic allowance, but a special responsibility allowance.
- iv. Concern was expressed about the implications of removing SRA payments for Vice-Chairs because of the variety of role performed

depending on the committee. The roles and responsibilities of Vice-Chairs were discussed.

- v. The basis for calculating the different multipliers and equivalent payments was suggested as a possible area for future focus of the panel.
- vi. Clarification was requested on the likely timescale for the future implementation of any changes to the decision making process that may arise from the Localism Bill. The committee were advised that it was unlikely that any new arrangements could be implemented prior to 2013.

The committee recommendations 2.1 – 2.8 (as amended) and resolved

- i. (4 votes to 0) to accept recommendation 2.1
- ii. (1 vote to 0) to reject recommendation 2.2
- iii. (4 votes to 0) to accept recommendation 2.3
- iv. (4 votes to 0) to accept recommendation 2.4
- v. (4 votes to 0) to accept recommendation 2.5, subject to the substitution of the word “subsidence” with “subsistence”.
- vi. (4 votes to 2) to accept recommendation 2.6
- vii. (4 votes to 0) to accept recommendation 2.7
- viii. To note recommendation 2.8

The committee thanked the panel for their work.

Resolved to

- i. Recommend a Members Allowances Scheme to Council for adoption on 7 April as amended (full amended scheme is appended to the adoption minute in appendix A)

- ii. Agree that the working assumption for the 2012/2013 allowance scheme will be the same as 2011/12 with an inflationary adjustment as set in the Council budget setting report (February 2012).
- iii. Agree that the Panel should consist of three members with an alternate, and that each member should serve a four year term, extended by two years.

11/19/civ Staff Code of Conduct

In accordance with section 100 (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 the chair ruled that the item should be considered despite only being publicly available for four clear working days, as it would not be practical to delay until the next meeting.

The Committee received a report from the Head of Human Resources recommending the adoption of a revised Staff Code of Conduct. The Head of Legal Services presented the report on behalf of the Head of Human Resources and also made the Committee aware of comments made by members of the Standards Committee, who had been sent the report.

The committee welcomed the document and the style in which it was written.

Resolved to

- i. To the revised staff code of conduct

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

CHAIR