

CIVIC AFFAIRS

15 September 2010

6.00 - 7.20 pm

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

Officers Present:

Director of Resources – David Horspool
Head of Accounting and Support Services – Julia Minns
Head of Internal Audit – Sarita Haggart
Head of Strategy and Partnerships – Trevor Woollams
Head of Legal – Simon Pugh
Principal Auditor – Bridget Bishop
Democratic Services Manager – Gary Clift
Electoral Services Manager – Vicky Breathing
Committee Manager – Martin Whelan

Representatives of the Audit Commission

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

10/44/civ Apologies for absence

Apologies for absences were received from Cllr Pitt, Cllr McGovern attended as an alternate.

10/45/civ Minutes of the meeting held 30 June 2010

The minutes of the minutes meeting held on 30th June were agreed as a true and accurate record subject to the correction of a minor typographical error in item 10/41/Civ.

10/46/civ Declarations of Interest

Cllr McGovern declared a personal interest due to a member of the Independent Remuneration Panel being a work colleague.

10/47/civ Public Questions

There were no public questions.

10/48/civ Audit Commission Annual Governance Report

The committee received a report from the Director of Resources introducing the Annual Governance Report. The District Auditor outlined the key messages in the Annual Governance Report and the changes in reporting requirements since the start of the coalition government.

Cllr Herbert requested clarification on the figures reported for the valuation of outstanding Icelandic banks investments and the currency exchange rates applicable. The District Auditor and the Director of Resources assured the committee that due process had, and was, being followed in the valuations made. Cllr Herbert agreed to liaise with the Director of Resources regarding the detailed questions he had.

Cllr Herbert also requested clarification on the figures included in the Statement of Accounts in relation to the Icelandic investment repayment percentages and the amount given in the Annual Governance Report. The committee were advised that this reflected the £1.42m, which had already been repaid to the Council.

The District Auditor and the Director of Resources were also questioned about the level of Pension Fund liabilities, and whether this represented an area of concern. The committee were advised of the existing and proposed provisions for additional pension contributions and of the review of the local government pension scheme, which is underway.

The committee thanked the representatives of the Audit Commission for their work. The District Auditor welcomed the comments and outlined the proposed changes to the local government audit framework for 2012 onwards.

The committee resolved by 6 votes to 0 to;

- (i) Receive the Annual Governance Report presented by the Audit Commission.

- (ii) Approved the audited Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2010
- (iii) Authorised the Chair of the meeting to sign the Letter of Representation and audited Statement of Accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2010 on behalf of the Council.

10/49/civ Internal Audit 2010/11 half yearly review

The committee received a report from the Head of Internal Audit regarding the half yearly review for Internal Audit.

The committee made the following comments

- (i) PCIDSS – Concern was expressed about the difficulty of ensuring compliance due to the vague nature of the supporting guidelines and the costs of using consultants for this type of work. The Head of Internal Audit acknowledged the concerns and advised the Committee that Internal Audit were involved in leading this process rather than the Authority having to engage consultants.
- (ii) City Services – A number of members expressed concern about the ability of the organisation to effectively manage the range of businesses, which had been previously managed by City Services. Specific concerns were raised in relation to external contracts and remaining competitive if the contract/contractor split was removed. The Director of Resources agreed to discuss any specific concerns outside of the meeting and assured the committee that the corporate restructure would be seeking to ensure that the necessary skills, systems and resources were in place to maximise the competitiveness and viability of these and any new business opportunities.
- (iii) Voids – The committee welcomed the good practice displayed in relation to the audit analysis of the existing process, particularly the use of end-to-end analysis.

The committee resolved by 6 votes to 0 to

Approve the adjustments to the plan for 2010/11.

10/50/civ E-Petitions

The committee received a report from the Democratic Services Manager regarding the implementation of an e-petition facility, which would come into effect on 1 December 2010. The committee noted that Council approved a new petition scheme on 27 May 2010, and that some minor changes were required as a result.

The Chair highlighted a small number of typographical errors in the proposed wording of the e-petition scheme. The Democratic Services Manager agreed to simplify the wording regarding the deadlines for submitting petitions.

The committee resolved to recommend to Council by 5 votes to 0 to

- (i) Amend the Council's Scheme for Petitions to include the facility for e petitioning with effect from 1 December 2010.

10/51/civ Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

The committee received a report from the Electoral Services Manager, regarding the review of polling districts, polling places and polling station stations.

The Chair requested that any detailed comments should be submitted as part of the review. Members of the committee made the following points

- (i) It was suggested that 3 polling districts, DD, ED and MC should be discounted as part of the review as they related to the previous parliamentary constituencies.
- (ii) With reference to polling districts HB and HC, it was questioned whether the existing arrangement of having two polling district voting at a single polling place should be continued. It was agreed that the approach should be consistent across the city.
- (iii) Members welcomed the possibility of widening the review and considering issues such as the pattern of voting throughout the day.

The committee resolved by 5 votes to 0 to:

- (i) Note the arrangements for designating polling districts and places for the purposes of parliamentary and local government elections;
- (ii) Use the starting point for public consultation be the current boundaries subject merging DD, ED and MC polling districts into the neighbour polling districts.
- (iii) Note that if there are a significant number of suggested changes to the current arrangements, a workshop be organised to take place after the close of the consultation period.
- (iv) Consider the recommendations arising from the consultation at a meeting of the committee on 15 November 2010, to consider and approve changes to polling districts and polling places. Any amendments arising through that process to be implemented with effect from the date of the publication of the revised Register of Electors on 30 November 2010.

10/52/civ Leader and Cabinet

The committee received a report from the Democratic Services Manager regarding the consultation undertaken during August 2010. The committee noted that whilst it was still a legal requirement to adopt to adopt the provisions, the government had indicated that they intended to revoke the legislation.

The committee resolved by 4 votes to 0 to

- i. Adopt the Leader and Cabinet model of executive governance as set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- ii. Agree that it will take effect from the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2011
- iii. Amend the relevant parts of the Constitution accordingly.

10/53/civ Committee Dates 2011 – 2013

The committee received a report from the Committee Manager seeking approval for the committee dates 2011 to 2013.

Members queried some of the dates suggested near half-term weeks and agreed to consider the dates at the meeting on 15th November for approval.

10/54/civ Members Allowances

The committee received a report from the Democratic Services Manager regarding the timetable for agreeing a member's allowances scheme for 2011/12.

The committee made the following comments;

- i. The value and reliability of time recording was questioned.
- ii The importance of a simple scheme, which could respond to changes in the political composition of the Council were highlighted, but it was agreed that it might be too complicated to achieve this.
- iii The possibility of resurrecting and slightly revising the formulae proposed by the panel in 2008 was suggested.

The committee resolved by 6 votes to 0 to;

- i. Agree that the Independent Remuneration Panel report its findings and recommendations to Committee on 23 March 2011.
- ii. Ask officers to investigate alternatives to the annual process approach this authority has followed since 2002 in agreeing its Allowances Scheme and report to the 23 March 2011 committee.

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm

CHAIR