

AUDIT COMMITTEE

6.00 P.M.

26TH OCTOBER 2004

PRESENT:- Councillors Malcolm Thomas (Chairman), Ian Barker, David Whitaker and Alex Stone

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Jon Barry

Officers in attendance:-

Roger Muckle	Corporate Director (Finance and Performance)
Nadine Muschamp	Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Sarah Taylor	Head of Legal and Human Resources and Monitoring Officer
James Doble	Principal Democratic Support Officer

11 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 28th July 2004 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

12 2004-05 AUDIT AND INSPECTION PLAN LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL

Fiona Blatcher District Audit Manager introduced the Audit and Inspection Plan for Lancaster City Council. It was outlined that the Plan had been developed in conjunction with Officers and that the Plan was different to previous years and contained different headings. The report included the assurance work which had been undertaken under the Code of Audit Practice and a further piece of work had been highlighted with regard to performance monitoring, democratic renewal and organisational change.

In response to questions from those present it was confirmed that Rob Huntington would provide the Council with further examples of how meetings of Full Council could be improved. It was confirmed that in terms of the Corporate Performance Assessment the progress of the Council to date following the inspection would be recorded in the annual letter due to be received in early December. It was also outlined that the Council would receive an inspection of the Access to Services Best Value Review. In reply Councillor Barker noted that the small team that would normally respond to Best Value Reviews was currently fully engaged with implementing the Access to Services Review and therefore both he and Management Team were keen not to overload this group with unnecessary inspections and further work. Fiona Blatcher confirmed that as Lancaster City Council was a fair authority it was necessary to carry out an inspection, however the Audit Commission recognised that it was more difficult for District Councils to provide the necessary resources to support inspections and would bare this in mind wherever possible.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

13 CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE EXERCISE OF THE CITY COUNCIL'S LICENSING FUNCTIONS - REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES ATTACHED.

The Head of Legal Services introduced the report which set out the constitutional arrangements required for the Council to enact its new licensing function. In summary it was outlined that the current Licensing Committee would be maintained for residual functions but with a reduced membership from 15 to 7 members from the next municipal year. The current Licensing Penalty Points Appeals Committee would cease to exist with its functions taken over by the Council Appeals Committee.

During discussion of the issue, Members expressed concern that wherever possible meetings should be arranged at times where a broad range of Councillors, including those who worked full time, would be able to be present. Members noted the difficulties of arranging such meetings particularly with the attendance of Members of the legal profession but felt that it was important to have a broad range of Councillors able to hear licensing applications. In response to a query from Councillors it was confirmed that if a case went on appeal to the Magistrates Court it would not be necessary for Councillors to attend that part of the hearing. It was proposed by Councillor Barker seconded by Councillor Whitaker: -

“That the recommendations as set out in the report be approved”.

Resolved:

That Option 1 be recommended to Full Council as the preferred option of the Audit Committee. That Council be requested to instruct the Monitoring Officer to make the appropriate amendments to the Constitution.

14 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 - REPORT OF THE INTERNAL AUDIT MANAGER ATTACHED.

The Head of Financial Services outlined that this report was for information and considered the use of the investigatory powers in the previous year. The Corporate Director (Central Services) noted that this form of monitoring to the Audit Committee was good practice.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

15 MEDIA GUIDELINES PROTOCOL - REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ATTACHED.

The Corporate Director (Central Services) outlined that this report had been brought forward from the last meeting. The amendments in the report were highlighted for Members to identify where the changes took place. It was noted that these changes

essentially updated the protocol following the adoption of the new Overview and Scrutiny system and therefore were procedural by their nature and could be enacted by the Monitoring Officer. It was proposed by Councillor Whitaker seconded by Councillor Thomas: -

“That the changes as set out in the report be agreed by the Monitoring Officer”.

Resolved:

That the changes as set out in the revised Media Guidelines be enacted by the Monitoring Officer.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 6.50 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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