

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE PANEL – AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Resources and Performance Panel
held on Tuesday 28 August 2012, at 6.41pm, in the Committee Suite, King's
Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn.**

PRESENT:

Councillors P Beal (Chairman), C Manning (Vice-Chairman), D J Collis (substitute for Mrs M Wilkinson), C J Crofts, M Hopkins, H Humphrey, M Langwade, J Loveless, A Morrison, D Tyler, A White, A Wright

Portfolio Holders:

Councillor B Long – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environment

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Collop, Mrs S Collop, N Daubney, M Wilkinson, T de Winton.

ARC41: **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Resources and Performance Panel – Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 24 July 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ARC42: **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

ARC43: **URGENT BUSINESS UNDER STANDING ORDER 7**

There was no urgent business to report.

ARC44: **MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34**

There were no Members present under Standing Order 34.

ARC45: **CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE**

The Chairman had no correspondence to report.

ARC46: **MATTERS REFERRED TO THE PANEL FROM OTHER COUNCIL BODIES
AND RESPONSES MADE TO PREVIOUS PANEL
RECOMMENDATIONS/REQUESTS**

There were none.

ARC47: **NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE 2010/12 SUMMARY OF WORK**

The Audit Manager presented the report which summarised the results received from the National Fraud Initiative as a result of the data matching exercise and the work carried out by the Council staff on the matches. She explained that the exercise was carried out every two years.

The Audit Manager drew the Committee's attention to point 2 of the report which detailed the work performed on matches returned to the Council. She explained that work was still to be carried out on Council Tax matches.

The Audit Manager informed the Committee that a briefing note with further information on the exercise was available to Members on insite.

She explained that at present the resulting matches had not revealed any major issues or frauds. She felt that the exercise was useful as it provided some additional assurance on the control measures that the Council had in place.

The Chairman invited questions from the Committee, some of which are summarised below.

In response to a question from Councillor Humphrey, the Audit Manager explained that the Council did have other methods in place for identifying cases of fraud, such as anonymous telephone calls from members of the public.

The Audit Manager clarified that the data matching exercise picked up details of matching data from two different authorities, for example it would pick up if a claimant was claiming a benefit from two different local authorities, or if a claimant registered as deceased on one system was still claiming on another system.

Councillor Humphrey drew attention to page 4 of the report point 1.2 which asked if the Council had a lead elected member for counter-fraud activity, including the National Fraud Initiative. The Audit Manager explained that it was not specified in the current Portfolios.

The Committee agreed that it was important to have a named Portfolio Holder to lead on counter-fraud activity and the Deputy Chief Executive agreed to investigate this issue and report back to the Committee.

The Committee discussed the methods the Council had in place for investigating fraud and agreed that it was important to take the necessary action to protect public money.

In response to a question from Councillor Loveless regarding the potential money which could be recovered as a result of the data matching exercise the Audit Manager explained that she would arrange a future update report in

six months time on progress with this issue.

Councillor Morrison asked if the data matching exercise was publicised by the Borough Council. The Audit Manager explained that all successful prosecutions were publicised.

RESOLVED: (i) The Committee noted the results of the work completed so far on the matches produced by the National Fraud Initiative and confirmed the approach to the investigations and the resources allocated to it.
(ii) That an update report be provided to the Panel in six months time.

ARC48: DRAFT LOCAL AUDIT BILL 2012 – RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

The Audit Manager presented the report which contained information on the Draft Local Audit Bill. She explained that since it had been announced to disband the Audit Commission, a consultation process had been carried out to establish the most suitable means of transferring its assets, liabilities and continuing functions to other bodies.

The Audit and Risk Committee had responded to the original consultation and had received regular updates on progress.

The Committee commented on the suggested responses to the consultation questions as follows:

Councillor Humphrey suggested that the response to question 15 should read: "The examinations must be kept relevant and timely, with a clear purpose and outcome. It should not result in public bodies constantly being asked to supply data and information *to feed an over bureaucratic process*". The Committee agreed that it was important to stress that information should not be requested just for the sake of it and it should be meaningful, useful and reviewed on a regular basis.

Councillor Humphrey referred to question 19 which detailed suggested remuneration costs for independent panel members. The Committee felt that it was important that remuneration costs were set by each individual authority dependant on the work involved and they discussed the importance of appealing to the right individual for the role.

The Committee discussed questions 21 to 26, which referred to smaller bodies. The Committee agreed that it was important that smaller bodies were subject to appropriate examination and audit. The Chief Executive informed the Committee that the same consultation document would have been provided to Parish Councils or their representative Association and other smaller bodies for response.

RESOLVED: (i) The Committee agreed with the suggested responses to the consultation document.
(ii) That the comments made by the Committee be incorporated to the suggested response.

ARC49: **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered its Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

ARC50: **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Committee Members noted that the next meeting of the Resources and Performance Panel – Audit and Risk Committee was scheduled to take place on 11 September 2012.

The meeting closed at 7.22pm