

AUDIT, PERFORMANCE & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
10 SEPTEMBER 1997

Present: Councillor Birch (Chairman)
Councillors Beadsley, Blatchford, Good, Mrs Hayes,
McCormack, North, Mrs Shillcock and Wade

10. Minutes.

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 13 May and 26 June 1997 were signed as a correct record.

11. Terms of Reference.

The Committee received a report from the Borough Administrator detailing two additional terms of reference for the Committee, which had been suggested that the last meeting, to provide it with remit to consider the implications for the Council of the report of the Nolan Committee and to consider the review and promotion of the Council's democratic processes at the request of Council or Strategy and Policy Committee. It was noted that a further report would be made, should the Committee need to seek additional powers.

RECOMMENDED that the additional terms of reference set out in the report be approved.

12. Audit Commission Publications and Reports.

The Committee received a report from the Borough Administrator detailing the latest report received from the Audit Commission. A system for the receipt, filing and actioning of these reports was being devised and details of this would be circulated to members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

13. Local Authority Performance Indicator Results 1996/97

The Committee received a report from the Borough Personnel Manager detailing the Performance Indicator Results for the Borough Council for 1996/97 and 1995/96. The Performance Indicators included indicators for dealing with the public, the provision of housing accommodation, housing the homeless, refuse collection, planning and land searches, paying housing benefit and Council tax benefit, collecting Council tax, leisure and recreation, looking after the local environment, and spending and income generally. The Committee noted that three of the indicators required by the Audit Commission had previously been selected for additional internal monitoring twice a year. Concern was expressed about the reactive monitoring arrangements for the Council's equal opportunities policy; an undertaking was given that this would be addressed in reviewing procedures.

The report sought the Committee's approval to publish the results set out in the Annexe to report in October.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Committee approve the Performance Indicator Results set out in the Annexe to the report for publication in October 1997;
- (ii) that the Committee note the Performance Indicator Results for 1996/97;
- (iii) that a review of the Performance Indicators reported internally be undertaken and that consideration be given the Borough Personnel Manager to integrate some of the Audit Commission Local Authority Performance Indicators to meet both the Government guidelines and the Council policy; and
- (iv) that a review of the overall complaints procedure be authorised.

14. **Local Authority Performance Indicators - Draft Response to Consultation Document 1997**

The Committee received a report from the Borough Personnel Manager outlining the consultation document received from the Audit Commission seeking the Council's views on the Performance Indicator process.

RESOLVED that the comments set out in Annexe B to the report be approved.

15. **Local Government Ombudsman Complaints**

The Committee received a report from the Borough Personnel Manager detailing the level of complaints to the Ombudsman in respect of Bracknell Forest Borough Council and the other authorities in Berkshire.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

16. **Report of Nolan Committee on Standards of Conduct in Local Government**

The Committee received a report from the Borough Solicitor detailing the recommendations of the Nolan Committee on standards of conduct in Local Government.

The report suggested an Officer Working Group be established to progress formulating a Borough Council response and that the Planning and Transportation Committee consider the Nolan Committee's recommendations relevant to the planning area.

RESOLVED

- (i) that an Officer Working Group including the Borough Solicitor, Borough Finance Officer, Borough Personnel Manager, Borough Administrator or their respective representatives be established to:
 - (a) formulate a protocol governing relations between Members and Officers;
 - (b) devise a whistle-blowing procedure for Council staff and staff of contracting organisations;

- (c) to consider whether it would be appropriate for the Council to establish a Standards Committee;
- (d) to review the employee conduct Code of Conduct;
- (e) submit a further report to a future meeting of the Committee.

RECOMMENDED that the Planning and Transportation Committee be invited to consider whether:

- (a) a procedure should be implemented for Member training on planning matters;
- (b) a code of best practice should be published; and
- (c) procedures to permit further member and public consultation on planning agreements should be formulated.

17. Preparation of an Internal Audit Plan 1998/99 onwards

The Committee received a report from the Borough Finance Officer detailing the need to prepare an internal audit plan which should be the basis for directing audit resources through the early years of the transition to unitary authority.

RESOLVED that the approach outlined in the report to the preparation of a new audit plan be endorsed, as representing a logical and methodical way to produce a plan capable of directing internal audit resources, according to assessed priority risks.

18. Status, Role and Scope of Internal Audit

The Committee received a report from the Borough Finance Officer setting out a convention for the Audit Section's role. Clarification of the meaning of "systems" was provided and this would be further clarified in the council's formal documents.

RESOLVED that the document attached as Annexe 1 to the report be adopted as the formal statement on the role, scope and terms of reference for the internal audit process.

19. KPMG Interim Report

The Committee received a report from the Borough Finance Officer detailing the outcome of the first stage of the audit of the 1996/97 accounts.

RESOLVED that the recommendations made by KPMG and management responses thereto be noted.

20. External Audit Review of Internal Audit

The Committee received a report from the Borough Finance Officer detailing the recommendation of KPMG on the internal Audit Section's work. The BFO would propose a set of programme indicators for the audit.

RESOLVED that the recommendation made by KPMG be noted that the responses made by the Borough Finance Officer be endorsed.

21. **Summary of Major Internal Audit Report**

The Committee received a report from the Borough Finance Officer outlining six internal reviews, together with an indications of the response by the Line management.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Committee note the nature of the recommendations made by Internal Audit; and
- (ii) that if necessary the Committee advise the relevant programme Committee of its views on the need to comply with the Audit recommendations.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and concluded at 9.20pm

CHAIRMAN