

## **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY, 3 MARCH 2015**

PRESENT:- Councillors Steve Weisinger (Chair), Steve Allsopp, Oliver Donachie, Neil Heavens, Nick Martin, Des Moffatt and Timothy Swinyard.

Councillors Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, and Emma Faramarzi, Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety, were also in attendance.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mark Edwards.

### **34. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

### **35. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

### **36. Minutes**

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014 be confirmed and signed.

### **37. Internal Audit reports identifying 'significant' risk or 'of concern': Licensing: Private Hire and Taxis**

Further to Minute 33(2), the Committee received a report on the outcome of the Internal Audit Review of the Council's Private Hire and Taxi Licensing function and providing an update on the Management Responses to the various audit recommendations, as set out in the Audit Report Action Plan.

The Council's Head of Planning was in attendance to provide a current position statement in relation to the implementation of the internal audit recommendations and, with Councillor Emma Faramarzi, Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety, responded to members' questions on issues raised regarding identified risk areas, the management response to the audit conclusions and key recommendations, and progress in implementing the action plan.

Resolved – That the report, and the management response to the audit review recommendations, be noted.

### **38. Risk Management - Prevention of Child Sexual Exploitation**

Further to consideration of matters relating to the Corporate Risk Register, at its November 2014 meeting, the Committee received a report providing information and assurance in respect of the Council's arrangements for the prevention of child sexual exploitation and, in particular, members' own role in that process. It was noted that Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) was among the most serious and

challenging issues that any Council would face and that a report setting out how the Council could further enhance its work in this area had been submitted to Cabinet on 4th February 2015 and that the Full Council had subsequently carried a motion to adopt the Child Exploitation Strategy (appended to the Cabinet report). Members were advised that, whilst the Strategy did not pre-empt any new recommendations that might come out from any new national reports, research documents, local case reviews or other new learning, it did take into account the national guidance, reports of recent high profile cases across the country, the Ofsted thematic CSE Review and other research of note.

The Council's Board Director Commissioning was in attendance and guided the Committee through a presentation of the background to CSE as a national issue, what it is and, by definition, what it isn't, the Council's commitment to a zero tolerance approach to this crime and its strategy and delivery plan to identify key areas of activity, practice development and areas for focus that would make the children and young people of Swindon safer.

Following his presentation, the Board Director and Councillor Fionuala Foley, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, supported by the Council's Head of Children, Families & Community Health, responded to members' questions and observations on the issues raised.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the practice of inviting corporate risk 'owners' to attend meetings of the Audit Committee, to provide Members with assurance regarding the key risks facing the Council, be incorporated in the Committee's future work plans. The Chair of Audit Committee to select future risks to be covered in conjunction with other Committee Members and the Head of Internal Audit and Corporate Risk Manager.

(3) That the Board Director Commissioning be thanked for attending the meeting, and for his very comprehensive presentation of the issues around CSE.

(4) That Councillor Foley, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, be also thanked for attending the meeting and that she and the Board Director Commissioning and the Head of Children, Families & Community Health, be thanked and for their full and open responses to members' questions on the issues raised by the presentation.

### **39. External Audit Reports**

- (i) Certification Work for Swindon Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2014

Chris Hackett (Grant Thornton) presented a report regarding the certification of claims and returns submitted by the Council. The report also provided a summary of the External Auditors' assessment of the Council's management arrangements in respect of the certification process and highlighted significant matters in relation to each of four claims and returns that were certified for the Financial Year 2013/14.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

- (ii) Audit Committee Update

Chris Hackett (Grant Thornton) presented a report advising the Committee of the External Auditors' progress, as at 16<sup>th</sup> February 2015, in respect of the delivery of

their audit responsibilities. The report also included a summary of key emerging national issues and developments that might be of interest to the Committee.

Resolved – That the report and supporting papers be noted.

#### **40. Head of Internal Audit Update**

The Committee received a report of the Head of Internal Audit summarising the main issues arising from the Internal Audit reports finalised since the last Audit Committee meeting in November 2014, progress made against the Annual Internal Audit Plan 2014/15 and Internal Audit staffing and resource issues.

Resolved – That the report be noted.