

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE JOINT AUDIT AND STANDARDS
COMMITTEE HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES CORKS LANE HADLEIGH ON
MONDAY 30 JUNE 2014

PRESENT:

BABERGH

Dave Busby (Chairman)
Brian Riley
Tony Roberts
David Rose

MID SUFFOLK

Gerard Brewster
David Burn
Stuart Gemmill
Elizabeth Gibson-Harries
Patricia Godden
Kathie Guthrie

1 SUBSTITUTES AND APOLOGIES

The following Members were unable to be present:

BABERGH

James Cartlidge
Frank Lawrenson
Robert Lindsay
Len Young

MID SUFFOLK

Duncan MacPherson
Jane Storey

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None declared.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting held on [3 March 2014](#) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4 PETITIONS

None received.

5 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None received.

6 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

None received.

7 BENEFIT FRAUD PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY – UPDATE 2013/14

Siobhan Martin, Head of Internal Audit at Ipswich Borough Council introduced [Paper JAC26](#), which was her report to the Borough Council summarising the Corporate Counter Fraud Service's performance for 2013/14.

Members were aware that the full year's performance figures for 2013/14, as requested at their meeting on 3 March 2014, were set out in paragraphs 2.2.14 and 2.2.15 of the report. Members took the opportunity to question Ms Martin about various aspects of the report, and the following were among items which were queried or referred to during the course of the discussion.

- What steps are being taken to pro-actively prevent fraud in the first place? *Publicising successful prosecutions; whistle-blowing telephone lines; matrix approach to target repeat offenders; effective cross-agency working with DWP / Police / HMRC etc*
- The types of fraud relevant to Right to Buy applications *these include eg money laundering*
- The costs of this work and value for money – *reference made to variations in figures for benefit overpayments (para 2.2.8) – no underlying cause identified. Variation in costs (para 2.2.9) reflects resources that the three partners put into the Shared Revenues Partnership (SRP) when it was established in April 2011*
- Identifying better recruitment security through appropriate personal checks – *the Head of Corporate Organisation will ensure that robust checks continue to be in place during the interim period before a permanent appointment is made to the post of Corporate Manager – Organisational Development*
- Reporting benefit fraud and whistleblowing effectiveness – how can Members help to deter and detect fraud?
- Prosecutions – *Councils have power to prosecute for benefit fraud (and corporate fraud) but the Police would prosecute where there is a link to other crimes, with appropriate Council support*
- Single Fraud Investigation Service – *a report will be made to the March meeting on the setting up of the service, its funding and staffing*
- Housing Tenancy fraud – *other than Right to Buy, this is the responsibility of the Housing Team*

RESOLVED

That the full year's performance figures for 2013/14 across both Councils, as set out in paragraphs 2.2.14 and 2.2.15 of [Paper JAC26](#), together with the additional information reported at the meeting, be noted.

8 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2013/14

The Head of Corporate Organisation presented a report ([Paper JAC27](#)) summarising the work undertaken by Internal Audit during the year and the resulting annual audit opinion. In response to a specific question about the position regarding reconciliations, the Head of Service confirmed that Corporate Managers are addressing the areas identified as requiring improvement and these would be followed up appropriately.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the outcomes of internal audit work in 2013/14 and the conclusion of the Corporate Manager – Internal Audit, that both Councils’ overall internal audit control arrangements provide an acceptable level of assurance, as detailed in Appendix A to [Paper JAC27](#), be noted.**
- (2) That it be noted that, as stated in paragraph 8.26 of [Paper JAC27](#), the Councils’ internal audit arrangements are effective and the opinion of the Corporate Manager – Internal Audit in the report can be relied upon as a key source of evidence in the Annual Governance Statement.**

9 END OF YEAR INTEGRATED SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISKS POSITION STATEMENT

Claire Crascall, Audit and Risk Management Services Officer, presented a report ([Paper JAC28](#)) from the Head of Corporate Organisation asking Members to review the contents of the Integrated Significant Business Risks Register and the actions being taken. Ms Crascall together with the Heads of Corporate Organisation and Resources responded to questions from Members.

Particular queries were raised regarding the process for moving all users to a single IT platform and the officers undertook to investigate the current position and how it was affecting the service to Members. The Committee was advised that the Councils’ insurer will hold a risk refreshment workshop to reflect the changing focus from the integration phase to delivery of the Councils’ Strategic Plan where economic growth is key, and an update will be provided to Members in due course. The Accommodation Review which is underway will address the specific risks of any options put forward for the Councils’ consideration. The Head of Corporate Organisation and the Section 151 Officer confirmed that robust systems were in place for the management of staff budgets.

RESOLVED

That the contents of [Paper JAC28](#) be noted.

10 UPDATE ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE LOCALISM ACT 2011

The Monitoring Officer presented a report ([Paper JAC29](#)) updating Members on the measures taken to comply with the requirements within Chapter 7 of the Localism Act and asking the Committee to identify any further actions required. She advised Members that she had arranged to visit the two parishes referred to in paragraph 8.2.4 of the report in September if compliance had not been achieved before then. She answered questions relating to the new system of e-forms which will be introduced shortly and confirmed that training will be provided to parishes.

RESOLVED

That the measures taken to comply with the requirements within Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011, as set out in [Paper JAC29](#) together with the further information reported at the meeting, be noted.

11 STANDARDS MONITORING REPORT: DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS/GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY (29 JANUARY 2014 TO 18 JUNE 2014 / 19 DECEMBER 2013 TO 21 MAY 2014)

The Monitoring Officer introduced [Paper JAC30](#) setting out the relevant information for monitoring purposes.

RESOLVED

That the information relating to Members' interests declared at meetings (Appendices 1A and 1B to [Paper JAC30](#)) and the nil returns for Gifts and Hospitality (Appendices 2A and 2B) for the period from 29 January 2014 to 18 June 2014 for Babergh District Council and for the period from 19 December 2013 to 21 May 2014 for Mid Suffolk District Council be noted.

12 COMPLAINTS MONITORING REPORT

The Monitoring Officer submitted [Paper JAC31](#) detailing Code of Conduct complaints received or determined in the last quarter. She referred to the increase in the number of complaints received, some of which were as a result of the same complainant making more than one complaint. Members were advised that future reports will include the date of individual complaints and indicate whether they are new / on-going. Consideration would also be given to an alternative to the current way in which letters are used to identify Councillors.

RESOLVED

That the content of [Paper JAC31](#) be noted.

13 WORK PLAN

The Head of Corporate Organisation submitted a report ([Paper JAC32](#)) relating to items that had been identified on the Committee Work Plan. Members noted the following updates which were reported or had arisen from consideration of other items on the agenda:-

1 September

Non-Salary Expenses

Overview of the Commissioning and Procurement Team – past activity, what it has achieved, costs and plans for the future

Textile Recycling Bag Scheme – Business Case Savings

10 November

Integrated Significant Business Risks – Risk refreshment (subject to results of workshop being available)

16 March

Single Fraud Investigation Service

RESOLVED

That the contents of [Paper JAC32](#), together with the updates reported at the meeting, be noted.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 11.45 a.m.

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Chairman