

Minutes

Audit and Scrutiny Committee Tuesday, 27th January, 2015

Attendance

Cllr Clark (Chair)	Cllr Dr Naylor
Cllr Barrett (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Sleep
Cllr Chilvers	
Cllr Mrs Hones	

Substitute Present

Cllr Newberry (substituting for Cllr Mrs Squirrell)
Cllr Parker (substituting for Cllr Kerslake)

Also Present

Cllr Aspinell	Cllr Kendall
Cllr Baker	Cllr Mynott
Cllr Cloke	Cllr Sapwell
Cllr Mrs Hubbard	

Officers Present

Ben Bix	Corporate and Democratic Services Manager
Christine Connolly	Ernst & Young, External Audit
Ashley Culverwell	Head of Borough Health Safety and Localism
Zoey Foakes	Governance & Member Support Officer
Helen Gregory	Interim Head of Housing
Debbie Hanson	Ernst & Young, External Audit
Claire Hayden	Governance and Member Support Officer
Richard Hayes	BDO, Internal Audit
Keleigh Holmes	Senior Investigations Officer
Jo-Anne Ireland	Acting Chief Executive
Tracey Lilley	Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator
Liana Nicholson	BDO, Internal Audit
Chris Potter	Monitoring Officer & Head of Support Service
Steve Summers	Head of Customer Services
Sue White	Risk and Insurance Manager

413. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Kerlake with Cllr Parker in attendance as substitute and apologies were received from Cllr Mrs Squirrel with Cllr Newberry in attendance as substitute.

414. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 26th November 2014 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

415. Annual Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Review

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Annual Scrutiny Report provided an update on the work of the partnership over the year and gave details of crime figures relating to the strategic priorities of the CSP. It also included details of activities undertaken by the partnership.

The report compared crime figures for 1 October 2013 to 30 September 2014 with 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013. Whilst reductions had been achieved in most crime types, and 508 less offences (12.8% reduction) had been recorded overall, there had, however, been an increase in violent crime.

On further examination, 41% of violent offences related to altercations which occurred within the hours of daylight and included incidents such as; road traffic and parking disputes, schools and playground bullying and dangerous dogs. Violent offences relating to the night-time economy was 32% of the total and 27% were linked to domestic violence. The majority of violent offences occurred within the home.

During the time period, Brentwood had achieved the highest reduction in all crime across the County.

Overall the committee was pleased with the reduction in crime but requested more analysis by Ward. It was confirmed that ward level analysis would be made available in the near future.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Clark and **SECONDED** by Cllr Barrett to receive the recommendation in the report.

After a full discussion, a vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

- 1. The following comments and concerns of the committee be referred to the Community Safety Partnership.**
 - a. The unavailability of information on recorded crime and road safety in the Borough during part time night lighting.**
 - b. The need to increase awareness in Brentwood in relation to child sexual exploitation.**

- c. That crime statistics relating to the night time economy be made available.
- d. Ward specific data for crime figures was requested.
- e. Members concerns relating to Speedwatch and the trespassing of quad bikes be noted.
- f. The excellent work on the Firebreak Project be commended.

416. Internal Audit Progress Report

The report detailed the progress to date against the internal audit plan that was agreed at the Audit Committee in March 2014.

The report also included an update on the progress of the implementation of the recommendations raised by the previous internal auditors and the progress of implementation of recommendations raised in the current year.

The report on Car Park and Golf Club Income was *limited assurance* in terms of design, and therefore was included as a full report as Appendix B to the progress report.

A motion was MOVED by Cllr Clark and SECONDED by Cllr Barrett to receive the recommendation in the report.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

- 1. Members received and noted the content of the reports.**

417. Annual Certification Report 2013/14

The report before members presented the External Auditor's annual report in respect of the Certification of Claims and Returns.

A motion was MOVED by Cllr Clark and SECONDED by Cllr Barrett to receive the recommendation in the report.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

- 1. The contents of the Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report 2013/14 be noted.**

418. Budget Scrutiny Feedback

Councillor Barrett introduced the report.

The committee heard that effective scrutiny could add considerable value to how the Council made decisions on the allocation of resources. This had

become increasingly important as the Council continued to set budgets against a background of tough economic conditions and severe funding cuts from Central Government. The medium term financial planning process would need to address these continued financial challenges and develop a strategic approach to address funding gaps.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Clark and **SECONDED** by Cllr Barrett to receive the recommendation in the report.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

1. The feedback on the Proposed and Anticipated Savings outlined in para 4.4 be agreed and submitted to Finance and Resources Committee,

2. The Finance and Resources Committee be requested to provide further information within their future reports on how the funding gaps would be addressed,

3. The feedback on the Proposed Budget Investments outlined in paras 4.6 and 4.7 be agreed and submitted to Finance and Resources Committee,

4. The Budget Scrutiny work would commence in September in future years and start with a service review of existing budgets,

5. The proposed working balance level of £2.1m - £2.2m be supported; and

6. The Council Tax Financial Modelling would be presented to the Finance and Resources Committee for consideration.

419. Strategic and Operational Risk Review

The Strategic Risk Register and Operational Risk Registers were reviewed and submitted to the Committee for approval.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Clark and **SECONDED** by Cllr Barrett to receive the recommendation in the report.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

1. Members agree the Strategic & Operational Risk Registers and that the risk score recorded for each risk accurately represented the current status of each risk.

420. Business Continuity Progress Report

The report summarised the work being undertaken to ensure that Brentwood Borough Council had sufficient business continuity arrangements in place which would activate in whole or in part if critical infrastructure was lost within the short or long term. Business continuity arrangements were essential if the Council was to remain functional in the maintenance of its services to the public and other stakeholders.

The Business Continuity function was audited on 14 March 2014. The measures put in place would ensure that all recommendations made in the audit report were suitably actioned.

The need for continual updating was discussed and featured in the workplan. The completion of a shared telephone system with Southend Borough Council would improve resilience.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Clark and **SECONDED** by Cllr Barrett to receive the recommendation in the report.

After a full discussion a vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

1. Members agree the work which had been undertaken to date and progress on outstanding matters.

Termination of Meeting

During the preceding item, in accordance with Rule 28 of Part 4.1. – Council Procedure Rule, the business of the meeting not having concluded by two hours after its start, Members voted to agree to continue with the meeting for a further 30 minutes.

421. Corporate Complaints Monitoring and Freedom of Information Requests

The report was before Members to monitor and review the complaints received through the Council's formal complaints process and provide information on the number of Freedom of Information requests received to date. It was intended through the introduction of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system the Council would be able to understand, monitor and manage better customer complaints and requests.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Clark and **SECONDED** by Cllr Chilvers to receive the recommendation in the report.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

1. The Committee noted the complaints received through the Council's formal complaints process and the number of Freedom of Information Requests received.

422. Fraud Statistics

The report provided Members with details of the work of the Fraud Investigation team for the period November 2014 through to December 2014. The number of completed investigations and the subsequent sanctions applied to offenders had no relation to the number of investigations opened during the same period.

81 referrals of potential fraud were reported between November 2014 and December 2014. All of the referrals were for suspected Housing Benefit (HB) and/or Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) fraud.

11 cases were successfully investigated during this period, all for benefit fraud. The Fraud Investigation team applied sanctions to all 11 cases.

The report also provided details of the Borough's performance in detecting benefit fraud and corporate fraud and how it compared with other Local Authorities within its comparator group.

With the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) taking over benefit fraud there would be an opportunity to look at potential areas of corporate fraud.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Clark and **SECONDED** by Cllr Parker to receive the recommendation in the report.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

- 1. Members noted the fraud statistics contained within the report.**
- 2. Approval was given for officers to undertake further analysis into the viability of expanding the role of the existing counter fraud team to include areas of potential corporate frauds not currently investigated.**

423. Review of Provision of Legal Services

This item was withdrawn.

424. Scrutiny Work Programme 2014/15

The Audit and Scrutiny Committee was invited to consider its 2014/15 scrutiny work programme.

The Chair would approach the Shadow Chair about the Brentwood Community Transport item on the work programme.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Clark and **SECONDED** by Cllr Sleep to receive the recommendation in the report.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

1. The Audit and Scrutiny Committee agreed the scrutiny work programme 2014/15.

425. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business to discuss.

426. Local Government Act 1972 - Exclusion of Press and Public

There was none.
