

ACCOUNTS & REGULATORY COMMITTEE

16 SEPTEMBER 2008

Present :- Councillor Sue Lissimore (Chairman)
Councillors Martin Goss, Dave Harris, Jackie Maclean,
Jon Manning, Nigel Offen, Gerard Oxford, Laura Sykes
and Dennis Willetts

Substitute Members :- Councillor Sonia Lewis for Councillor Kevin Bentley
Councillor Pauline Hazell for Councillor John Bouckley

11. One Minute Silence

A one minute silence was observed for The Mayor, Councillor Peter Crowe, who passed away on 15 September 2008.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, said their thoughts and deepest sympathies went to Councillor Margaret Fairley-Crowe and her family.

12. Congratulations

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, expressed their thanks to Mr. Andy Wilks, Finance Manager, who was shortly to retire having given over forty years of dedicated service to the Council. Mr Wilks had completed the statutory accounts for the Council for many years. The Chairman wished Andy and his wife Sylvia, who was also to shortly retire from the Council, a long and happy retirement.

13. Minutes

The minute of the meeting held on 30 June 2008 was confirmed as a correct record.

14. Annual Governance Audit Report

Ms. Christine Connolly, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Commission attended the meeting and presented the Audit Commission's Annual Governance Audit Report.

The Annual Governance Report was a report in accordance with international standards of Auditing, with a requirement to be reported to the Accounts and Regulatory Committee.

Ms. Connolly, whilst commenting on the findings from Key areas of judgement and audit risk, said there was nothing within the report that should delay officers signing the Management Representation Letter, and that the Audit Commission were proposing to issue an unqualified audit opinion prior to the statutory deadline of 30 September 2008.

Ms. Connolly thanked officers for their full co-operation and positive approach to the audit.

In response to Councillor Offen, Mr. Wilks said some auditing work focusing on Colchester Borough Homes was extra work for the Audit Commission. This work would usually have been carried out by Deloitte, the Internal Auditor, but due to the sensitivity and timing of the audits in light of the Decent Homes Programme it was not completed. Therefore, the Audit Commission had carried out the work on controls and testing to provide confidence in the figures.

RESOLVED that Committee noted the Annual Governance Audit Report.

15. Annual Statement of Accounts

Mr. Andy Wilks, Finance Manager presented the Annual Statement of Accounts report.

Mr. Wilks explained that this was the 2nd phase of reporting, with the pre-audit Statement of Accounts having been presented to the Committee in June 2008.

Mr. Wilks said the report addressed the issues raised by the Audit Commission's Annual Governance Report, and was being presented to the Committee to note. Mr. Wilks was pleased to confirm that there were no major concerns raised by the Audit Commission and an unqualified audit opinion was expected.

Mr. Wilks confirmed there had been four enquiries by the public, to inspect the Statement of Accounts, part of the Council's statutory duty. These were two enquiries in person (one by an officer of the local press), one telephone enquiry and one letter of enquiry. Mr. Wilks confirmed that the enquiry in person by a member of the public took 2-3 hours of officer time to complete.

RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- i) Noted the Audit Commission's Annual Governance Report.
- ii) Noted the comments in the covering report 'Annual Statement of Accounts'.
- iii) Approved the Letter of Representation.