

**FINANCE & AUDIT SCRUTINY PANEL
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 Kevin Lewis for Councillor Kevin Bentley
Councillor John Hazell for Councillor John Bouckley

27. Minutes

Mr. Robert Judd, Scrutiny Officer apologised for the delay in providing the minutes of meeting on 2 September 2008. These would be provided to the next meeting on 21 October 2008.

Councillor Sue Lissimore (in respect of being a former Member of Colchester Borough Homes) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Dave Harris (in respect of being a Member of Colchester Borough Homes) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

28. Work Programme 2008-09

Following a lengthy discussion on the future scrutiny of the Decent Homes Programme, with contributions from Councillors Lissimore, Oxford, Offen and Manning and Willetts, the panel resolved the following:-

RESOLVED that;

- i) Officers would arrange an informal briefing for all members of the panel at the earliest convenience, to be briefed on the Decent Homes Programme Contract.
- ii) Officers would prepare a 'timeline', a chronological order of key points and crucial events, with dates and times, which led to a mediation settlement, to be presented at the informal briefing.
- iii) Mr. Ian Vipond, Executive Director, would provide to members of the panel at the informal briefing, a Project Plan, for the panel to agree, detailing what is to be included within the substantive report, with an estimate of how long it will take to prepare.
- iv) The panel agreed that at this stage, a meeting date would be fixed (either a scheduled meeting or an extra meeting, but with sufficient time for members to

prepare) to review the report, and the Chairman of Colchester Borough Homes and past and present Chief Executives of Colchester Borough Homes would be invited to attend this meeting.

v) Officers would assist the panel in preparing a report to be presented to Cabinet either in December or January, dependent on the timing.

vi) The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the Work Programme would be updated accordingly, and agreed to add to the Work Programme the item on the Risk Management update on the Council's top five risks to be reported to each panel meeting.

29. 1st Quarter Internal Audit Assurance Report

Ms. Hayley McGrath, Audit and Risk Manager, and Mr. Alan Woodhead, Internal Auditor (Deloitte) attended the meeting for this item. Ms. McGrath presented the 1st Quarter Internal Audit Assurance Report.

Ms. McGrath confirmed that discussions with officers at Colchester Borough Homes in regards to future joint audits were open and constructive. An Audit Plan had been agreed and the lead officer on joint audits would present the audit report to the appropriate panels within Colchester Borough Council and Colchester Borough Homes.

In response to Councillor's Harris and Offen's concerns about the non-implementation of some Health and Safety recommendations, Ms. McGrath confirmed their concerns would be reported to the Executive Director for comment and the outcome would be reported back to the panel.

In response to Councillor Offen's concerns about the number of outstanding audits days that remained in 2008-09, Ms. McGrath reassured the panel that an influx of auditors would not spread paralysis through the organisation, and that the message given is always that the auditors presence is one of assistance to service areas, and that they will be flexible in their working arrangements, thereby causing as little disruption as possible. Ms. McGrath also confirmed that Deloitte, the internal auditors were able to provide increased resources to ensure the delivery of all outstanding audits.

RESOLVED that;

i) The panel commented and noted the 1st Quarter Internal Assurance Report.

ii) The panel agreed to receive feedback from the appropriate Executive Director about the concerns of the non implementation of some health and safety recommendations.

iii) The panel agreed to receive a response from the Head of Life Opportunities on why it was acceptable to not agree an audit recommendation, in reference to the

Transfer Incentive Scheme.

iv) Mr. Alan Woodhead, Deloitte's agreed to report to the panel the results of follow-up audit in regards to the Visual Arts Facility.

30. Trust Funds

Mr. Andy Wilks, Finance Manager, presented the report on Trust Funds.

In response to panel members the following was agreed;

RESOLVED that the panel;

i) Noted the report and current position on Trust Funds and the steps being taken to activate the three charity accounts.

ii) Requested that officers continue to pursue the Charity Commissioners in regards to the Sir Thomas White's Charity and the possibility of transferring the funds to the Freeman of Colchester.

iii) Requested that officers talk to organisations outside the five current trustees of the Colchester Lying-in-Charity, who could identify mothers who would benefit from trust fund payments. Midwives at the General Hospital, Colchester Borough Homes and local Housing Associations were suggested as good contacts.