

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

14 APRIL 2011

SUBJECT:	ANNUAL REPORT ARMC
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR S HOLBROOK
KEY DECISION ?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The meeting of the Audit and Risk Management Committee on 17 January 2011 considered a statement by the Chair regarding the requirement to complete an annual report to Cabinet on the work undertaken by the Audit and Risk Management Committee.
- 1.2 Attached at Appendix A is the Annual Report prepared by the Chair in consultation with Internal Audit which was agreed by the Audit and Risk Management Committee on 28 March 2011.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. That the Annual Report be noted.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To comply with best practice identified in the CIPFA publication 'A Toolkit for Local Authority Audit Committees'.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) issued amended regulations in 2006, to the 2003 Accounts and Audit Regulations – 'The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006.
- 4.2 One of the amended regulations impacts on the process for preparing the Statement of Internal Control (SIC) which is subsumed within the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and relates specifically to the the systems of internal audit in operation. This is:-
 - Regulation 6 requires bodies to regularly review their system of internal audit, and for the findings to be considered by a committee of the body, or by the body as a whole.

- 4.3 Advice from CIPFA includes the assertion that the “systems of internal audit” can be considered to include the role and effectiveness of the Audit Committee which therefore should be assessed and evaluated.
- 4.4 To assist Councils in this evaluation exercise CIPFA has provided a self assessment checklist and recommended that this be completed annually by the Audit Committee.
- 4.5 On 22 November 2010 the Audit and Risk Management Committee considered the findings of the self assessment exercise and agreed to the preparation of an Annual Report.
- 4.6 An annual report for 2010/11 has been prepared by the Chair in consultation with Internal Audit and is attached at Appendix A for consideration by Members.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 5.1 Potential failure of the Audit and Risk Management Committee to comply with best professional practice and thereby not to function in an efficient and effective manner.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 No other options were considered.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee have been consulted throughout the process regarding the content of the annual report and their views are reflected in the final document attached.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 8.1 There are none arising from this report.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

- 9.1 There are none arising from this report.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are none arising from this report.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are none arising from this report.

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are none arising from this report.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 There are none arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - Audit and Risk Management Committee Annual Report 2010/11

REFERENCE MATERIAL

CIPFA Publication 'A Toolkit for Local Authority Audit Committees'

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Audit and Risk Management Committee	22 November 2010
Audit and Risk Management Committee	17 January 2011
Audit and Risk Management Committee	28 March 2011

AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

Councillor S Mountney, Chair
Councillor L Rowlands, Vice-Chair

AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE:

ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is the first Annual Report produced by Wirral Council's Audit and Risk Management Committee. It has been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA best practice publication 'A Toolkit for Local Authority Audit Committees' and shows that the Council is committed to working as an exemplar organisation, operating the highest standards of governance. The report shows how the Audit and Risk Management Committee has successfully fulfilled its terms of reference and has improved the Council's governance and control environments.

2. SOME KEY INFORMATION

2.1. Audit and Risk Management Committee Membership

The Audit and Risk Management Committee has 8 Members:

Councillor Simon Mountney - Chair
Councillor Les Rowlands - Vice-Chair
Councillor Ron Abbey - Spokesperson
Councillor Peter Reisdorf - Spokesperson
Councillor Cherry Povall, JP
Councillor Jim Crabtree
Councillor Darren Dodd
Councillor Alan Brighthouse

There is strong officer support to the Audit and Risk Management Committee, through the regular attendance of the Director and Deputy Director of Finance, The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management and the Chief and Deputy Chief Internal Auditor. Other officers attend as and when appropriate.

2.2. Key Features of the Audit Committee and its Operation

The Committee meets CIPFA's definition of best practice as illustrated below:

Best Practice	Expectation	Met	Comment
Independence	Independent from the executive and scrutiny	√	The Committee reports to the Council
Number of Members	3 to 5 members	√	The Committee has 8 Members
Number of meetings	Aligned to business needs	√	The frequency of meetings, 5 times a year enables all business to be considered in a timely manner
Co-option	To be considered relative to skills	√	Training is provided to increase Members' skills
Terms of Reference	Accord with suggested best practice	√	The Committee has adopted the CIPFA recommended model ToR.
Skills and training	Members have sufficient skills for the job	√	General and specific training is provided to increase Members' skills

2.3. Meetings and Attendance

The Audit Committee normally meets 5 times per year in January, March, June, September and November. There have been 3 meetings to date and a further 2 scheduled during the 2010/11 financial year.

Attendance by Members and approved deputies (for June, September and November) was 92%

3. CORE ACTIVITY 2010/11

3.1. Terms of Reference

The Audit and Risk Management Committee's Terms of Reference are comprehensive, cover all main areas and are attached at Appendix 1 to this annual report. The Committee's work and outcomes in each of its areas of responsibility are summarised in the following subsections.

Internal Audit

The Audit and Risk Management Committee:

- Approved the Chief Internal Auditor's audit plan
- Considered regular reports produced by the Chief Internal Auditor, highlighting internal audit work completed, internal audit performance against key indicators and any significant issues arising during the period
- Considered the Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Report and assurance opinion on the Council's control environment
- Considered reviews of the effectiveness of the systems of internal audit
- Ensured internal and external audit plans were complementary and provided optimum use of the total audit resource
- Considered a report on the CIPFA statement on "*the Role of the Head of Internal Audit*"
- Considered and approved revisions to Chief Internal Auditors Audit Plan
- Considered the Chief Internal Auditors Annual Report on the implementation of recommendations identified in Audit Commission reports.

We continue to provide support to the Internal Audit service to ensure management is responsive to recommendations made and agreed.

External Audit

The Audit and Risk Management Committee:

- Considered the external auditor's Audit Plan
- Considered progress against the plan presented by the external auditor
- Received and considered all external audit and inspection reports issued in the year and considered management's response to them, ensuring robust and thorough responses
- Reviewed the Council's progress on all external audit and inspection recommendations on a regular basis and asked managers to explain progress where appropriate, thereby holding them to account.

- Received and considered all of the external auditors reports on the Merseyside Pension Fund
- Considered the external auditors Annual Report on Governance.

We continue to provide support to external audit to ensure management is responsive to recommendations made and agreed.

Risk Management

The Audit and Risk Management Committee:

- Received details of the risk management system, how it works and arrangements in place for mitigating risks
- Considered reports on the departmental and corporate risk registers and promoted risk management across the Council
- Enquired about specific risks and the application of risk management arrangements within departments

We continue to provide support to promote effective Risk Management policy and procedures across the Council and ensure best practice is achieved.

Internal Control and Governance

The Audit and Risk Management Committee:

- Considered reports on the CIPFA statements on “*the Role of the Chief Finance Officer in the Public Sector*” and “*Head of Internal Audit*”
- Agreed the Council’s Annual Governance Statement and action plans to improve identified weaknesses
- Considered and supported changes to the Council’s Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy
- Reviewed the effectiveness of the Council’s Anti-Fraud and Corruption arrangements
- Supported work undertaken as part of the Audit Commission’s National Fraud Initiative
- Considered and supported amendments to the Council’s Money Laundering Policy.

The Annual Governance Statement is a key document which summarises the Council’s governance arrangements and the effectiveness of the arrangements during the year.

Accounts

The Audit and Risk Management Committee:

- Agreed the Council’s accounting policies
- Agreed the Annual Statement of Accounts
- Received and considered the external auditor’s report on the accounts, and ensured that the Council responded to the auditor’s comments
- Agreed the annual Merseyside Pension Funds accounts
- Received and reviewed a report on the Insurance Fund Actuarial review
- Considered the implications of the introduction of International

- Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) within local government
- Reviewed the Council's progress towards the implementation of the IFRS.
- Considered financial reports on budget projections for 2011/15.

The Audit and Risk Management Committee received regular reports on the Council's Treasury Management arrangements in the context of the economic downturn.

Specific Issues

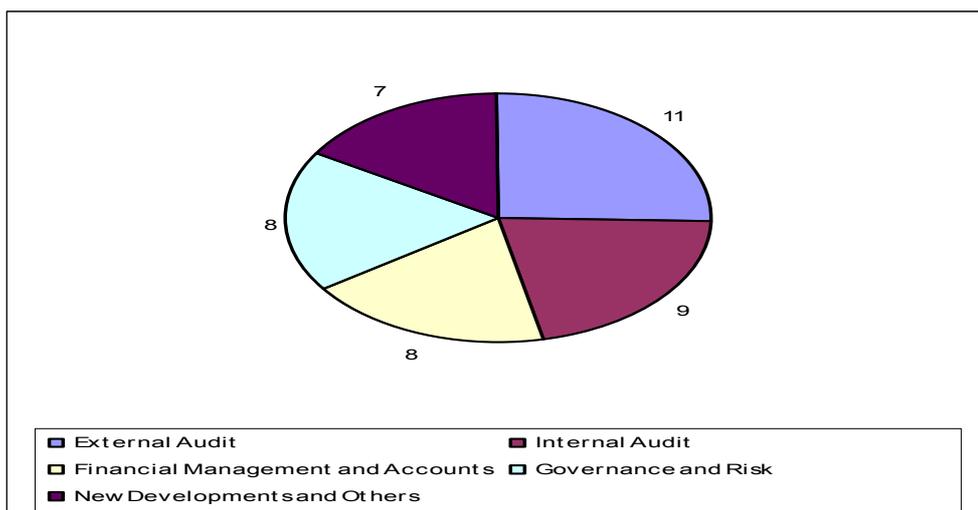
The Audit and Risk Management Committee also considered reports on the following specific issues which arose in the period:

- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Insurance arrangements and performance
- Care Quality Commission report on Safeguarding Adults with a Learning Disability
- ICT Strategic Review
- HESPE PIDA Follow Up
- SOCITM Review of ICT Provision
- Consideration of a range of publications relevant to the Audit Committee's terms of reference

To give a flavour of our business during the year, the following shows the types and numbers of reports considered between May 2010 and November 2010:

3.2. Numbers & Types of Reports Considered by the Audit Committee

The Audit and Risk Management Committee covered a wide range of business



4. OTHER ACTIVITIES

During the year, the Committee demonstrated its commitment to good governance by :

- i) authorising amendments to the draft Annual Governance Statement.
- ii) Arranging special meetings and devoting significant resource to addressing the issues arising from the PIDA disclosures which were made.
- iii) Referring several matters to Cabinet for attention.
- iv) Asking Chief Officers to attend as appropriate and present reports on issues identified which affected governance.

5. OUTCOMES

The Audit Committee aims to focus on adding value through its activity. By concentrating on outcomes the Committee can identify the benefits of its work. In particular this year the Audit Committee:

- Oversaw work on the Statement of Accounts which received a clean opinion from the external auditor
- Agreed the production of the Council's corporate Risk and Insurance strategy.
- Encouraged and presided over a strengthening of the control environment, specifically by overseeing reviews of Corporate Governance and the production of the Annual Governance Statement
- Encouraged and presided over the development of the Council's Counter Fraud arrangements by overseeing the CIPFA Managing Fraud self assessment exercise as acknowledged by the Audit Commission's recognition of good practice in a national publication.
- Oversaw and contributed to creditable performance in the revised Use of Resources assessment

In addition, individual Members and the Audit Committee collectively continued to develop and learn about our roles, and deliver these roles effectively.

6. PLANS FOR 2011/12

The Audit and Risk Management Committees priorities are to continue to meet our duties as specified in the Constitution by developing and building on our current status in a very challenging and changing environment. For 2011/12 we will:

- Continue to drive up standards and meet the demanding requirements of the external inspection and assessment regime
- Continue to review all governance arrangements to ensure the Council adopts the very latest best practice.
- Continue to support the work of Internal and External Audit and ensure appropriate responses are given to their recommendations

- Ensure we maintain and further improve our standards in relation to the production of accounts
- Closely monitor the implementation of the International Financial Reporting Standards
- Review the process for the appointment of auditors to replace the Audit Commission,
- Monitor the reduction in the performance reporting requirements and assess the suitability of the remaining performance measures following the decision by central government to reduce the requirements for local authorities in this area,
- Continue to help the Council to manage the risk of fraud and corruption
- Continue to develop the Wirral Council Audit and Risk Management Committee to review governance, risk and partnerships' issues and safeguard public sector interests
- Equip existing and any new Members to fulfil our responsibilities by providing refresher training on financial arrangements and risk management.

During 2010/11 we have consolidated the progress we made in previous years, and going forward we look to continue to be a champion of good governance.

Councillor Simon Mountney (Chair)
Wirral Council Audit and Risk Management Committee
March 2011

7. APPENDIX 1

AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Council's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process.
2. The Committee has the following duties, powers and authorities:
 - 2.1. approval of the Council's statement of accounts;
 - 2.2. the responsibilities of the Council under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to make proper provision for its financial affairs;
 - 2.3. to consider and make recommendations to Council or Cabinet as appropriate on;

- 2.3.1. the annual Audit Report and the Management Letter of the external auditor;
- 2.3.2. any other statutory report of the external auditor;
- 2.3.3. any internal audit report that may be referred to the committee by the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance or the Head of Legal and Member Services (as Monitoring Officer);
- 2.3.4. summaries of specific internal audit reports as requested;
- 2.3.5. the effectiveness and adequacy of the response by the Council, the Cabinet, any committee or sub-committee of the Council or of any officer to any internal or external audit report or management letter;
- 2.3.6. the systems of control and the arrangements for the prevention of fraud and corruption within the Council;
- 2.3.7. any other matter relevant to the audit of the Council's accounts and financial records or its systems for the control and safeguarding of all the Council's assets;
- 2.3.8. a report from Internal Audit on agreed recommendations not implemented within a reasonable timescale; and
- 2.3.9. the Head of Internal Audit's annual report and opinion, and a summary of internal audit activity (actual and proposed) and the level of assurance it can give over the Council's corporate governance arrangements;
- 2.4. to approve (but not direct) the strategy, plan and performance of the Council's internal audit service;
- 2.5. to oversee the production of the Authority's Statement on Internal Control and recommend its adoption;
- 2.6. to maintain an overview of the Council's Constitution in respect of contract procedure rules, financial regulations and codes of conduct and to make recommendations to Council or Cabinet, as appropriate;
- 2.7. to monitor the Council's policies on "Raising Concerns at Work", to the anti-fraud and corruption strategy and the complaints procedure;
- 2.8. to liaise with the Audit Commission over the appointment of the Council's external auditors.
3. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee shall act as the Council's Risk Management Champion.
4. Executive Members will not normally be members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee