

LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL

Audit Committee

Minutes of the meeting of Louth County Council Audit Committee held in Setanta Room, County Hall, Dundalk on Monday 11th May, 2015 at 2.15pm

In Attendance: Dr. Philip Byrne (Chairman)
Mr. Billy Doyle
Mr. Richard Bowden
Councillor Kevin Callan
Councillor Conor Keelan
Mr. Paddy Donnelly, Secretary to the Audit Committee
Mr. Joe McGuinness, Director of Services
Mr. David Storey, Senior Executive Officer

Apologies: none

Guests: Ms. Pauline Poots, Capita

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 2nd March 2015 were confirmed on the proposal of Mr. Billy Doyle and seconded by Mr. Richard Bowden.

2. Conflicts of Interest

The Chairman, Dr. Philip Byrne raised the matter of conflicts of interest in regard to the agenda for the day's meeting. There were no conflicts of interest recorded.

3. Internal Audit Report

Ms. Pauline Poots of Capita, the Councils Internal Audit service provider, presented to the committee the first internal audit report completed by the Capita team which dealt with Debt Collection and Credit Control.

The Chairman noted that the report was commercially sensitive and led a lengthy discussion in relation to the findings of Ms. Poots and her team. The Chairman welcomed the report and congratulated Ms. Poots and her team on its format and presentation. He looked forward to the commitments given by the Management Team being addressed, and expected that the Audit Committee would at a future date revisit the report with a view to seeing how well the response actions identified by Management had been progressed.

4. Schedule of Audits

The Meetings Administrator circulated the proposed Schedule of Audits that would be carried out by the Capita team in the coming months. It was agreed that the schedule as circulated would form the basis of the Audit Programme for the current year. It was noted that issues regarding the County Checker role would be dealt with on week beginning 10th June and the Payroll Audit would be carried out on week commencing 17th June.

The Chairman, Dr. Philip Byrne gave a short update to the members of the committee in regard to debt collection nationally, which was looking at three options including:

- the current model,
- a Central Collection Agency, or
- a Shared Service option.

These options will be developed and discussed at a national level in the coming months with a decision being made by the end of 2015. The Chairman also noted that Louth County Council and Donegal County Council will participate in a pilot project in relation to debt collection, and he expected that this matter would come before the committee at a future meeting.

5. Housing Procedures

Mr. Joe McGuinness, Director of Services and Mr. David Storey, Senior Executive Officer presented to the Chairman and the members of the committee a report that had been drafted in relation to the formulating of procedures for use in the Housing Directorate.

There followed a discussion in relation to the process regarding formulation of these procedures, and in particular around the report prepared by Ms. Ann O’Keeffe who facilitated the process which was led by Mr. David Storey.

The Director, Mr. McGuinness advised the members that he and Mr. Storey were currently looking at an “exceptions sheet” which would be necessary to allow staff the opportunity, in exceptional cases, to introduce exceptions into procedures. This process was ongoing and would likely revert back to the Audit Committee at a future date.

Members queries in relation to how the procedures are used, and whether procedures as currently drafted were now in use was addressed and confirmed by Mr. McGuinness.

The Chairman, Dr. Philip Byrne summarised that the Audit Committee would now consider the Ann O’Keeffe report in advance of their next meeting and make proposals or suggestions to the Director and the Chief Executive on the matter at that stage.

6. Risk Register

The members noted the Operational Risk Register that had been circulated for their attention and discussed same. Mr. Billy Doyle was keen to see a high level Corporate Risk Register that would form an overarching basis upon which the Operational Register could be considered by the committee. This was agreed by the members, and it was requested that a Corporate Risk Register be circulated as soon as possible to the committee for their consideration.

Following contributions from all members of the committee, the Chairman agreed that at the next meeting he would propose to invite a Director of Service to present their Operational Register to the committee, and detail how issues are being dealt with in a specific Directorate. This would then follow through all meetings until all the Directorates had been addressed.

7. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed, subject to the availability of the Capita team, that the next meeting would be held on Monday 13th July at 2.15 pm.

There being no other business the meeting concluded.

Confirmed at Meeting held on: _____

Chairman: _____

Meetings Administrator _____