

**RISK MANAGEMENT STEERING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES  
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 6.15 pm on 7 APRIL 2008**

Present:- Councillor R Sherer – Chairman.  
Councillor R Clover.

Officers in attendance:- Richard Auty (Head of Community Engagement), Sheila Bronson (Acting Audit Manager), Meng-Chee Leong (Internal Auditor), Lisa Lipscombe (Emergency Planning Officer), Roz Millership (Head of Housing Management) and Rebecca Procter (Committee Officer).

**RM26 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Michael Perry, Geoff Smith and Adrian Webb.

**RM27 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**RM28 BUSINESS ARISING**

**(i) Minute RM13 – Risk Management Update**

With reference to the ring fenced budget for risk management previously agreed with Zurich, the Acting Audit Manager said unfortunately the fund was not in fact available. The reason for this was that during the course of re-examining budgets, this budget had been analysed as a contingency fund, and was not retained. The absence of such a fund did not invalidate the insurance.

**(ii) Minute RM16 – Business Continuity**

The Chairman asked the new Emergency Planning Officer to review the Business Continuity Plan.

**RM29 REVIEW OF COMPOSITION OF STEERING GROUP**

The Group considered the report of the Acting Audit Manager. It was noted that following the recent re-organisational and staff changes, the Group had reduced in number and that further review of its composition was recommended.

**AGREED**

The membership of the Steering Group to comprise

2 Members Cllrs R Clover and R Sherer

8 Officers Lead Officer – Audit Manager

Assistant Chief Executive  
Emergency Planning Officer

And the Heads of:-

Finance  
Housing Management  
Community Engagement  
Environmental Health  
Partnerships and Performance

RM30

## **REVIEW OF CORPORATE RISK REGISTER 2007– 09 AND MONITORING PROGRAMME**

The Group considered the report of the Acting Audit Manager. Discussions were currently taking place with the Strategic Management Board regarding the final agreements on risk levels for the Corporate Risk Register. A number of actions had already been assigned to Officers in the Covalent system, and this system would be likely to be in full use by next month. The Head of Community Engagement asked that the action 07-CP-P04 (headed Committee Structure and Area Panels) be amended to show the correct assignment of this task to the Head of Partnerships and Performance. It was noted that there were some further amendments necessary regarding tasks which had previously been assigned to the Chief Executive.

In reply to questions, the Acting Audit Manager said that this document represented the entire Corporate Risk Register, but that there was also an Operational Risk Register, comprising 83 subdivisions, which would require a lengthier timescale. She said that the next stage was to enter all actions into Covalent, and then assess the monitoring programme which would be required. She confirmed that the meetings of this Group would form part of the monitoring process. The Chairman said that, as stated on page 9 of the report, it was important to invite the Director responsible to attend Group meetings to discuss their risk management, especially where significant changes to risk ratings occurred or had been achieved.

There was discussion of the format upon which the Risk Register was to be based. The Acting Audit Manager confirmed that the approach was similar to that adopted by other local authorities, as a benchmarking exercise had been carried out. It was noted that “risk” may be defined as “an action or event that could prevent the organisation achieving its objectives”. There was discussion of the role of the Risk Register as an operating manual. In reply to a comment that certain risks could fall outside the control of the organisation, the Acting Audit Manager said that this was where contingency plans came into force.

It was AGREED to approve the draft Corporate Risk Register and the proposed programme for the monitoring of the Register during 2008/09.

**OPERATIONAL RISK REGISTER MONITORING 2008/09**

The report of the Acting Audit Manager was considered. The review and updating exercise had commenced at the time the Heads of Division were appointed, but full completion of the task had not yet been achieved within the original deadline of 31 March 2008. Some people had completed the review, but there were a number who had only completed part of the exercise. As it was recognised that staff had faced other priorities over the last year, it was now proposed to set a deferred target date of 31 May 2008.

The Internal Auditor said that there were a total of 83 different Operational Risk Registers for which staff were responsible. Those who had achieved stage 3 comprised 25% of staff; 33% had partly completed stage 1, and 42% were yet to enter any information on Covalent.

The advantages of Covalent were discussed, in particular the ability to track all actions. Positive feedback had been received, and it was noted that people were becoming more confident in using the system. Training had been offered to some people, and it was noted that those who had used the system could provide informal advice on shortcuts.

Councillor Clover expressed astonishment that the practice of tracking income and expenditure throughout the organisation had not previously been done as a matter of routine. He said that this would not be tolerated in other organisations. The Head of Housing Management said that one of the reasons for this was the fact that FIS did not link in with other systems.

**AGREED that**

1. the date for the review and updating of all operational Risk Registers be deferred to 31 May 2008, to enable Risk Managers to get their review and updating of all Operational Risk Registers for which they hold responsibility to the required stage 3;
2. the monitoring programme be amended to include, in the first instance, a review of any Risk Registers that have not been updated and reviewed to the required stage 3 level by 31 May 2008;
3. Risk Manager(s) responsible be required to attend the next meeting of the Group to provide an explanation for the failure to meet the extended deadline or provide an explanation in writing, with a report on their performance to be submitted to the Performance Select Committee.

**PARTNERSHIP RISK ASSESSMENT UPDATE**

The Acting Audit Manager said that a list of partnerships had been identified at a joint meeting between Heads of Division and Strategic Management Board in order to carry out risk assessments. This exercise would start with assessing strategic partnerships in accordance with the recommendation of the Audit Commission.

The Chairman asked for further progress on this assessment to be made before the next meeting. The Acting Audit Manager said that the Head of Partnerships and Performance would attend the next meeting to provide an update.

RM33

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE**

The Acting Audit Manager read out an update from the Head of Environmental Health. In terms of health and safety, this was an uncertain time. Responsibility lay with the Strategic Management Board, Heads of Division and line managers to ensure health and safety risks in their divisions were adequately controlled, risk assessed and monitored. The Head of Environmental Health had agreed to take back responsibility for accident reporting and seeking from HoDs and line managers the necessary accident investigation reports. He would also be responsible for ensuring proper workplace inspections took place, and would act as the link between the Health and Safety Co-ordination Group and HoDs/SMB.

It was noted that the Head of Environmental Health expressed the hope that another officer would take on Chairmanship of the group. There was discussion of officers who could potentially be approached.

It was noted that there was no longer a dedicated post of Health and Safety Officer, following the recent redundancies. Concern was expressed as to whether Heads of Division were qualified to take on the responsibility of Health and Safety. This was to an extent a co-ordinating role, but there would be occasions when advice would need to be sought from appropriate sources, possibly Essex County Council. Officers confirmed that Health and Safety inductions for new staff were now to be conducted by Heads of Division.

There was a need to address the corporate health and safety policy, which varied across Divisions as there were particular risks associated with certain areas, such as the printroom. The Head of Housing Management said that legislation regarding evacuation of sheltered housing blocks had in fact changed, and this would need to be incorporated into corporate policy. She expressed concern at taking responsibility for a policy which was out of date. The Chairman agreed that this was a valid concern, and that Heads of Division should know who would be their central "port of call" for health and safety matters. It was

AGREED that clarification be sought as to who in the organisation should be responsible for health and safety.

RM34

### **BUSINESS CONTINUITY UPDATE**

The Emergency Planning Officer said that as she was new to the post, there was not much to report yet. She raised the issue of repatriation as one of the serious possibilities that could impact on the District. She intended to discuss contingencies with staff at Stansted Airport with a view to hosting refugees in their airside survivor centre.

RM35

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would take place on Monday 7 July 2008 at 6.15 pm.

The meeting finished at 7.15 pm.