working together for excellence

FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting Agenda

**Performance Improvement
Community Forum
Lowther Pavilion, Lytham
21 November 2005, 7.00pm**

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY FORUM

MEMBERSHIP

CHAIRMAN - Councillor Keith Hyde
VICE-CHAIRMAN – Councillor John Dolan

Councillors

Derek Lancaster	Fabian Wilson
Albert Pounder	Hilda Wilson
Thomas Threlfall	

CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

The Council's investment and activities are focused on achieving our five key objectives which aim to :

- Conserve, protect and enhance the quality of the Fylde natural and built environment
- Work with partners to help maintain safe communities in which individuals and businesses can thrive
- Stimulate strong economic prosperity and regeneration within a diverse and vibrant economic environment
- Improve access to good quality local housing and promote the health and wellbeing and equality of opportunity of all people in the Borough
- Ensure we are an efficient and effective council.

CORE VALUES

In striving to achieve these objectives we have adopted a number of key values which underpin everything we do :

- Provide equal access to services whether you live in town, village or countryside,
- Provide effective leadership for the community,
- Value our staff and create a 'can do' culture,
- Work effectively through partnerships,
- Strive to achieve 'more with less'.

FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

A G E N D A

PART I - MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

ITEM	PAGE

REPORT

FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT FORUM	21ST NOVEMBER 2005	4

STATE OF THE BOROUGH REPORT

Public/Exempt item

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

Summary

The report describes the State of the Borough event together with the information that was gathered from the exercise and seeks guidance from Members on the holding of any similar events in the future.

Recommendation/s

1. That Members advise officers as to the future form and function of the State of the Borough event.

Executive brief

The item falls within the following executive brief: Community Engagement (Councillor Paul Rigby)

Report

1. The State of the Borough Event was held in accordance with the Council's high priority action in the Corporate Plan, which was to hold a 'State of the Council' discussion. The subject area of budgetary issues was felt to be highly appropriate given the close proximity to the time of budget setting.

2. The aim of the State of the Borough event was to gather opinions from a representative sample of the public on a range of budget issues which would then be presented to members to help them in their task of setting the budget for the 2006/07 period.

3. As the Council had never held a similar event before a significant amount of research was undertaken to locate best practice in the field that the Council could mirror. A broad range of information was collected from a variety of other Councils and organisations, which helped the project team devise a means of conducting the large scale event.

4. The newly formed Citizens Panel provided the attendees of the State of the Borough. The Citizens Panel consists of around one thousand residents of the Borough who have agreed to take part in consultation on a periodic basis throughout the year. The Panel is set up and run by an external company who are responsible for ensuring that the profile of the members remains representative of the population of Fylde. The company were requested to provide the event with one hundred and twenty members of the public who would be classed as a representative cross-section of the Borough who were of an eligible age to pay Council Tax. The external company who run the panel were not contracted to enable ad hoc setting up of Panels and as such the Council had to pay the company a specific sum, details of which are included below.

5. To gather information from the attendees an electronic voting system was seen as the most appropriate tool for the participants to feedback their opinions. Using this process meant that votes were completely anonymous and results could be displayed instantly. A company called IML, who have been used by other local authorities for similar events, were recruited to provide the technical expertise and hardware to facilitate the event.

6. The event generated information on a broad range of budget topics which should be of value to members when they begin making their deliberations on how to set the budget for the next financial year. The questions and the results are displayed at Appendix 'A'.

7. The feedback from those who participated and were present at the event are contained within Appendix 'B' and may be of value to members when considering the recommendation contained within the report.

8. The estimated cost of the event was just under £6,000. The figure can be broken down into £2,600 to provide the event with technical support and keypad voting systems, £3,000 to pay for the recruiting of one hundred and twenty members of the Citizens Panel, £200 in refreshment costs and a further £150 to hire tables and linen for the event.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	To hold a similar event in the future would have a similar cost implication.
Legal	No further implications arising from the report.
Community Safety	No further implications arising from the report.
Human Rights and Equalities	No further implications arising from the report.
Sustainability	No further implications arising from the report.
Health & Safety and Risk Management	No further implications arising from the report.

REPORT AUTHOR	TEL	DATE	DOC ID
Dave Joy	01253 658700	3rd November 2005	State of the Borough Report

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS		
NAME OF DOCUMENT	DATE	WHERE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION
None	N/A	N/A

Attached documents

Appendix 'A' – Questions and responses given at the State of the Borough Event

Appendix 'B' – Feedback from the State of the Borough Event

State of the Borough 2005

"You Pay - You Say"

FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Appendix 'A'

With which 3 Fylde Borough Council services are you MOST satisfied?

❶ Leisure Services
11%

❷ Parks & Open Spaces
22%

❸ Housing Services
2%

❹ Planning
3%

❺ Street Cleansing
15%

❻ Waste Collection
30%

❼ Tax Collection & Benefits
5%

❽ Environmental Health & Protection
9%

❾ Economic Development
3%

Total Number of Respondents = 85

Appendix 'A'

8

With which 3 Fylde Borough Council services are you LEAST satisfied?

❶ Leisure Services
11%

❷ Parks & Open Spaces
6%

❸ Housing Services
7%

Total Number of Respondents = 89

❹ Planning
17%

❺ Street Cleansing
12%

❻ Waste Collection
4%

❼ Tax Collection & Benefits
12%

❽ Environmental Health & Protection
9%

❾ Economic Development
22%

Appendix 'A'

What is your overall level of satisfaction with Fylde Borough Council services?

❶ Very satisfied
2%

Total Number of Respondents = 89

❷ Satisfied
35%

❸ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
35%

❹ Dissatisfied
23%

❺ Very dissatisfied
5%

Appendix 'A'

Appendix 'A'

Which 3 Fylde Borough Council services are the MOST important to you?

❶ Leisure Services
7%

❷ Parks & Open Spaces
13%

❸ Housing Services
4%

Total Number of Respondents = 89

❹ Planning
8%

❺ Street Cleansing
15%

❻ Waste Collection
24%

❼ Tax Collection & Benefits
6%

❽ Environmental Health & Protection
15%

❾ Economic Development
8%

Appendix 'A'

Which 3 Fylde Borough Council services are the LEAST important to you?

❶ Leisure Services
15%

❷ Parks & Open Spaces
8%

❸ Housing Services
22%

Total Number of Respondents = 87

❹ Planning
12%

❺ Street Cleansing
4%

❻ Waste Collection
0%

❼ Tax Collection & Benefits
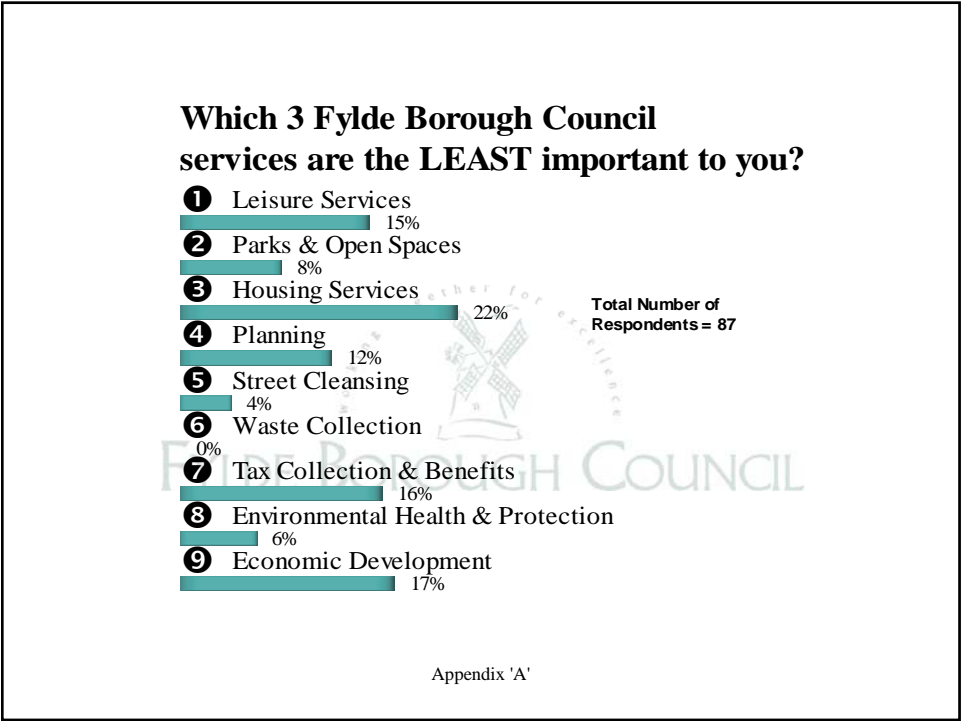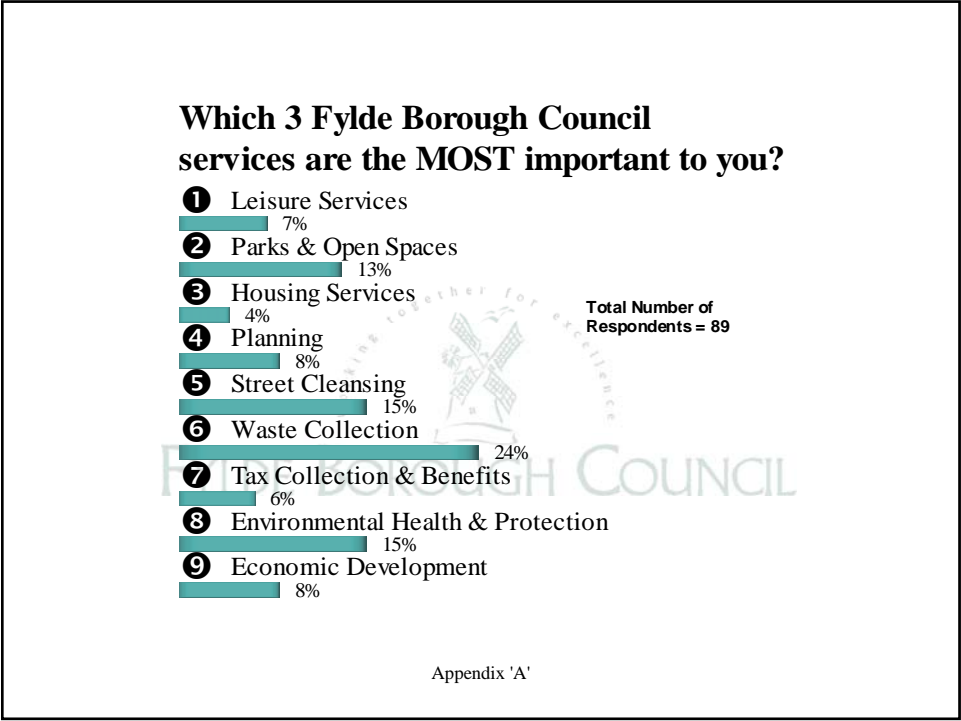16%

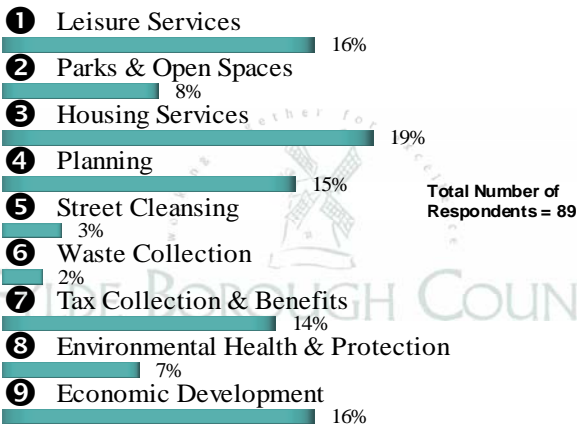❽ Environmental Health & Protection
6%

❾ Economic Development
17%

Appendix 'A'

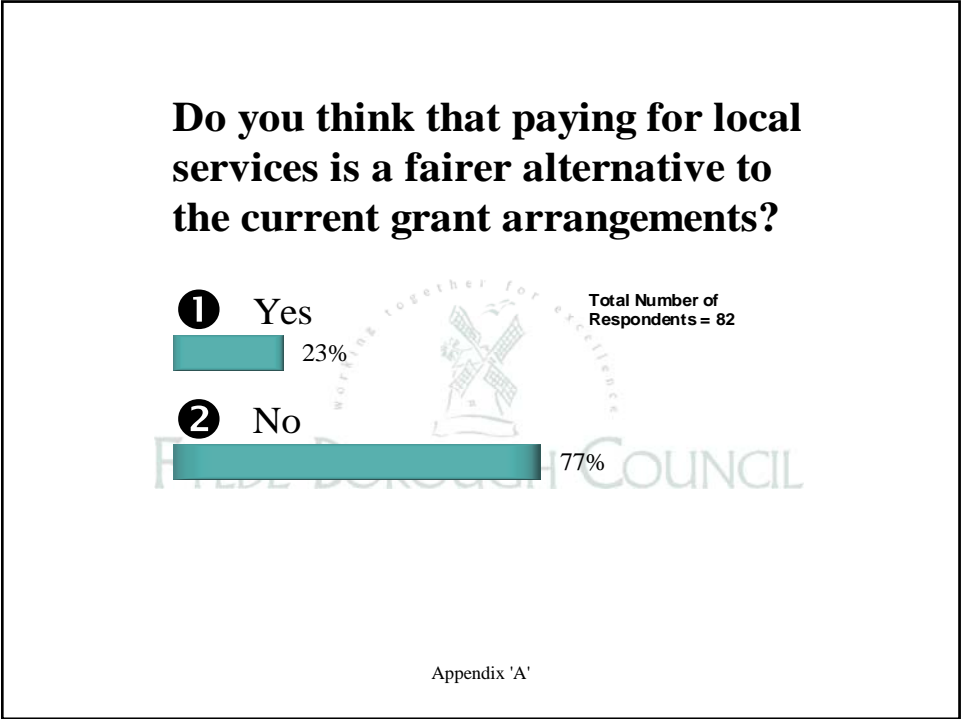**If needs be... on which 3 services should the council reduce it's spending?**

❶ Leisure Services — 16%
❷ Parks & Open Spaces — 8%
❸ Housing Services — 19%
❹ Planning — 15%
❺ Street Cleansing — 3%
❻ Waste Collection — 2%
❼ Tax Collection & Benefits — 14%
❽ Environmental Health & Protection — 7%
❾ Economic Development — 16%

Total Number of Respondents = 89

Appendix 'A'

Which of these 3 options would you support?

Total Number of Respondents = 85

❶ £0 increase in Council Tax
- Services reduced significantly
18%

❷ Approx. £25 increase in Council Tax
- Business as usual
50%

❸ £25+ increase in Council Tax
- Investment in important services
32%

Appendix 'A'

Do you think that paying for local services is a fairer alternative to the current grant arrangements?

❶ Yes

23%

Total Number of Respondents = 82

❷ No

77%

Which is the best way for the Council to balance its budget?

❶ Reduce Services

9%

Total Number of Respondents = 81

❷ Increase Council Tax

15%

❸ Introduce Local Payment for some Services

13%

❹ Combination of 1 & 2

16%

❺ Combination of 1 & 3

13%

❻ Combination of 2 & 3

23%

❼ Combination of 1 & 2 & 3

11%

FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

State of the Borough Debate
20th October 2005
Lowther Pavilion

FEEDBACK ON THE EVENT

1. Did you find the information easy to understand?

Yes = 52 (59%) No = 2 (2%) Some = 34 (39%) Total Responses = 88

2. Did you find the presentations clear and understandable?

Yes = 54 (61%) No = 2 (2%) Some = 32 (36%) Total Responses = 88

3. Do you have a better understanding of the subject area?
Total Responses = 88

Not at all	1 = 2 (2%)	2 = 2 (2%)	3 = 30 (34%)	4 = 38 (43%)	5 = 16 (18%)	Completely

4. Did you find the venue suitable for the event?
Total Responses = 88

Yes = 86 (98%) No = 2 (2%)

5. Was the equipment e.g. the key pads, easy to use?
Total Responses = 88

Yes = 87 (99%) No = 1 (1%)

6. Would you attend a similar event in the future?
Total Responses = 88

Yes = 81 (92%) No = 1 (1%) Maybe = 6 (7%)

7. Which topic(s), if any, would you like to see at a future State of the Borough event?

- More financial information including history
- More information on efficiency
- The future of Local Government on the Fylde Coast
- General Debate
- Council Tax
- Location of all Borough services
- Traffic speeding controls/enforcement
- New housing for low incomes
- Public safety within Borough
- Local economy issues – jobs/wages/retaining young people/ disabled services/ health issues
- Lancashire County Council services – social services, their reaction on local services i.e. police/benefits
- Regeneration
- Efficiency issues
- Expenditure
- Planning and heritage issues/ economic development
- Parish Precepts
- Proposals for new council offices
- Law and Order
- Law and Order in St. Annes
- How efficiency has improved
- Housing services
- Why do services vary in different areas
- Distinction between legal and optional and government pressures
- Budget decisions/ Leisure facilities, Development and Policy
- Capital expenditure
- Expenditure/ FBC Services
- More specific topics on spending
- Re-development e.g. ST. Annes, the property debate re housing
- Planning
- Ideas for young/children in the Borough
- Council efficiencies
- Safety/crime
- Health and Safety, disabled issues
- Council efficiencies that are being made
- Mayorality/ Number of Councillors
- Services/housing/benefits
- Teenage issues
- Efficiency of operation

- Provision for active pensioners
- Conservation are upkeep, don't sell off old buildings but conserve them, make our Borough beautiful
- Greater efficiency
- Future spending – keep us up to date
- Planning
- Improve standards of Parish Councils
- Specific Budget areas
- Why so many new flats instead of affordability – housing for young people
- Septic tanks
- Parking issues/ policing
- Future Planning
- More emphasis on possible economies/savings
- Exploration of spend/budget saving options
- Same format as tonight

8. **Please put any additional comments you may have in the space below.**

- If you want to listen you should not constrain the range of expressions
- Better control over Q/A
- Purchase some hand microphones
- More pre-reading should have been issued
- Questions weighted poorly
- Why does it take eight months to pay the grants?
- Well done!
- Surprise how little we know
- Very useful
- I worry for the future of our younger generation
- Essential that officers have facts to satisfy questions
- It would have been useful to have been provided with factually correct, objective background info on the subject matter prior to the evening to inform our decision making
- Is it possible to have a 'pay as you go' services as some use services more than others and they can see what they are getting
- Greengage – excellent facilitating
- In giving local residents this was a good start but I would like you to consider running smaller events in areas of the Borough Council to encourage more involvement and greater understanding
- Mikes need improving
- Some presentations are very biased and intended to mislead
- I can't help but wonder how much the street furniture (metal hoops, glass domes) has cost the Fylde residents. They are in my opinion completely 'over the top', one might almost say 'vulgar'
- This meeting has been a very good idea

- Cut staff where necessary
- There is always a better way to do things
- Some issues with clarity of presentations and link to questions. It was quite difficult to make decisions on priority then put on pad. Warning on priority questions may help
- Good facilitation
- Pressing for efficiency savings is paramount
- Retain services at current level even if we have to pay more
- Pressure government to restore funding percentage
- Self-opinionated people spoiled the evening to a point. Some control on keeping these people on the subject would be welcomed
- Well presented, very informative
- Don't know why you felt it was necessary to give us name badges – an unnecessary expense
- Is FBC an investor in people?
- Doesn't Gershon require increased customer service satisfaction
- Some of the participants were really rude
- Council staff do work very hard (but not as hard as the NHS staff)!
- This was a 'spin' event managed to get a result, we need more open debates
- I hope the number of votes is included in the results – not just percentages
- Not enough time to ask questions of the panel
- Not really clear how this session will be used by the Council i.e. will some of the opinions collected be used as support for the council to introduce policies which we voted on tonight without much prior information or really any prolonged deliberation. How will the information collected from the audience tonight be used? Did we have enough information to make informed choices?
- Is it fair that one person in a Band H property pays more than a large family in a Band B property who generate more refuse have more cars and use the local services more? – I think not!
- It is an excellent idea for us to have an opportunity to attend such a meeting, found some answers to questions raised were not answered, possibly not able to, but coped very well with queries raised
- A lot of waste paper, notes could be condensed. MC should take no questions from people not using the microphone. Do not like being 'talked down' to
- Was there a truly representative sample of the FBC population i.e. 56% retired and only 18% with children
- Improve audience microphone system.
- Could give the opportunity for round table discussions – i.e. give residents not Councillors more say at these meetings
- Very interesting
- Although the event was promoted as impartial the presentations were obviously promoting the wishes of the council and could be interpreted as misleading
- Too many personal niggles being raised
- Well conducted evening

- If the council is run by a cabinet of 9 persons, why cannot we reduce the number of councillors?
- I did not like some of the vested interests and comments – which I though out of order and tried to influence the average person in the audience – could this have been better controlled? I though the facilitator otherwise was very good, I would welcome more debate on some of the more difficult issues i.e. benefits, housing, environment
- Try to get more younger people to attend as tonight's meeting had 55% retired people

STAFF FEEDBACK

- I thought it was significant that of the two most vociferous and negative people in the room, one was a former (early retired) Chief Officer of the Council and the other was a former Councillor from the 1970's – are these two person's views truly representative of today's community?

- I was made to feel part of the team that put on the event but by the end of the evening I felt like part of a much bigger team.

- It was great! But why do some people not trust us?

- One participant said that he wasn't satisfied with any of the services we provide. I'd like to know why that is so we can do something about it.

- I can't believe that so many people didn't know that we are one of the lowest spending Councils in the country. We need to shout this from the rooftops. If we don't, people will carry on believing all the negative hype from the vocal minority.

- We should do more events like this but let people ask whatever they want and have the facts at hand to give them answers – we need to expose and explode these myths about us being an inefficient council.

- I really enjoyed it and would be happy to be involved again. Apart from the obvious one or two, everyone else seemed to enjoy the event and appreciate the effort we put in to make it all work.

- As staff we hear about our Gershon efficiencies just about every week, but the public don't seem to know anything about the government's requirement for efficiencies.

- I thought the presenters were very brave - they made me feel proud to work for Fylde Borough Council.

- I thought it insulting that a minority tried to push their views onto all who attended. Everyone has their own mind and this time the technology enabled everyone to make their own choices.

- It was very useful for staff (front line), as well as our customers, as it was a useful insight into other services

- It put our point across that as an authority we are making a difference

- As front line staff we gained a lot from this. I would be more than willing to take part in such an event again

- It is very useful to get customer feed back at this sort of event, and to learn where we are doing well, and where improvements need to be made

- I particularly enjoyed the final presentation and I think that everyone appreciated the light humour. We need to inject a bit more humour to make sure people have an enjoyable as well as an interesting evening.

- We should have a Customer Services desk available at the end of the event to handle any queries or complaints regarding services.

- I take my hat off to Mr Joy!

- It was interesting, informative and even entertaining. You should do it again with 100 staff – they would appreciate it. Make it an annual event.

- On the night it went like clockwork but next time we should begin rehearsals in the morning and have a lunch on site – the sandwiches at 5.30 from the Chief Exec were very much appreciated. It was a great team effort.

- Throughout the event I could hear a grating sound and I thought it was the PA system but it was just someone grinding his axe!

REPORT

FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL TASK AND FINISH GROUP	PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY FORUM	21ST NOVEMBER 2005	5

FINDINGS OF THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Public/Exempt item

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

Summary

A Task and Finish Group was established in September 2005 by the Performance Improvement Community Forum, the group consisted of Councillors Keith Hyde and Fabian Wilson. The Task and Finish Group was set up to investigate the reason for an under performing BVPI and to consider all aspects of the planning decision process.

Recommendation/s

1. That training for Development Control members be made mandatory and the constitution be revised to reflect this. Substitute members also to undertake mandatory training if they wish to substitute for any member of the Committee. Training to be provided by an external organisation.

2. That any officer or member who shows disrespect towards each other in a meeting be reprimanded by the Chairman and be asked to give a public apology.

3. That quarterly informal Development Control meetings should be held to discuss items of concern and to generate any training requirements.

4. That all application sites should be videotaped to avoid the need for site visits and deferrals.

5. That training and presentations be offered to Parish Councils, local pressure groups, surveyors, architects and lawyers on subjects of local interest and possible service improvements.

6. Planning Officers where applicable to attend courses on presentation skills.

Executive brief

The item falls within the following executive briefs: Environment (Councillor Alfred Jealous) and Quality Services (Councillor John Coombes)

<u>**Report**</u>

1. The Task and Finish Group was originally set up due to concerns with BVPI 204 – 'Percentage of planning appeals allowed', which were raised at a Performance Improvement Forum in September 2005.

2. Members made the vital link between a poorly performing indicator and its knock on effect on the public's perception of the service. The public has a right to expect a high quality service that provides consistent decisions that they can rely upon. When the indicator is significantly failing to meet its target there is a high likelihood of customer dissatisfaction.

3. To recommend to the Development Control that they should endeavour to perform better in the BVPI could be seen to be fettering members' discretion so was ruled out as a recommendation at a very early stage in the review process.

Research

4. To fully understand the workings of the Development Control Committee the Task and Finish Group carried out specific research activities including set interview questions and similar authority comparison research as well as a significant amount of desktop research. Members also attended a limited number of Development Control meetings to seek practical experience with how they operated.

5. The interviews were conducted on a one to one basis with over seventy percent of the Development Control members taking part with the results contained within Appendix 'A' to the report.

6. Comparator research, which was undertaken with other similar authorities, is contained within Appendix 'B' to the report.

Visits to Meetings

7. The Task and Finish Group by no means state that the report is a definitive overview of the Development Control Committee as they only witnessed a limited number of meetings.

8. Task and Finish Group members observed many positive practices within the meetings but also witnessed areas of challenge where the Committee would be improved if addressed.

9. In general members were impressed with how the Chairman and Vice Chairman performed and their constant requirement for clarity on a range of points was seen to be a reassuring example of good practice.

10. Members of the Committee presented a diversity of knowledge and understanding on various planning issues and isolated pockets of members were extremely keen to base any judgement they had on applications on solid principles of planning guidance.

11. At times the Chairman struggled to keep control of the Committee this being largely due to some members who disregarded his comments and continued with their speeches. This is common issue with many committees and cannot be viewed as a failing in Chairmanship but is an issue with the understanding of some members of the basic principles of how a constructive meeting should be run. This behaviour although not particularly conducive to an effective meeting is understandable as emotions can run high when dealing with certain topics.

12. The greatest degree of concern was with the relationship that existed between the officers and members of the Committee. There were instances when members made personal remarks to officers which were considered unacceptable by the Task and Finish Group. There seems to be little spirit of joint working with officers and members, on numerous occasions there seemed no point in officers being present as the advice given was either wholly disregarded or belittled.

Other recommendations considered

13. Members of the Task and Finish Group gathered a very large range of recommendations from the research undertaken and tried to include only those they felt were most important to all that they had witnessed. It was felt though that the recommendations as a whole which were discussed as a whole should be include within the report and as such are included below.

- That members of the Committee be allowed to speak only once on any application during that Development Control Committee.

- That the possibility of holding some Development Control Committees in the afternoon be considered, so that members and officers can meet informally after the formal meeting to discuss progress made in a social environment.

- That refresher courses be given to Development Control members on a yearly basis.

- That an intermediate step in planning delegation be considered whereby on non-contentious issues where there has been an objection from the Parish Council or a concern by a Ward Councillor (either DC member or not), that the Chairman of the Development Control Committee, the Ward Councillor and relevant Planning Officer meet to discuss the application. If they can reach a decision the application would not go on to Committee but would in effect be delegated and agreed decision be observed.

- That pre-briefings for the whole Development Control Committee be held regarding highly contentious planning issues.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	There are likely to be financial implications if training is provided by an external organisation.
Legal	Under the political balance rules in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, it is up to political groups to decide who is to fill the seats allocated to that group on the committee. Any attempt to make training compulsory for members of the committee must therefore depend on the willingness of the political groups to co-operate with that policy.
Community Safety	No further implications arising from the report.
Human Rights and Equalities	No further implications arising from the report.
Sustainability	No further implications arising from the report.
Health & Safety and Risk Management	There is a risk of the Council having to fund planning appeals if advice from Officers is ignored and planning applications are refused.

REPORT AUTHOR	TEL	DATE	DOC ID
Task and Finish Group Members	01253 658423	8th November 2005	DC Task and Finish Report

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS		
NAME OF DOCUMENT	DATE	WHERE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION
None	N/A	N/A

Attached documents

Appendix 'A' – Interview Question Responses

Appendix 'B' – Other Authority Research

Interview Questions
Performance Improvement Forum DC Task and Finish Group

No.	Question	Answer
1.	What training have you undertaken whilst a member of the Development Control Committee?	Members attempted to attend as many training sessions as were available. Obviously those who had been on the committee for longer periods had attended more than more recently appointed members. Evidently the group were not able to ask the question of those who substituted on the committee.
2.	Do you feel the training has adequately prepared you to sit on the Development Control Committee?	There were a range of answers to the question which stretched from the training had been more than adequate to the training quality needed to be improved.
3.	Do you think training should be mandatory or remain voluntary?	Nearly everyone interviewed felt training should be mandatory and that this should also apply to any substitutions on the committee.
4.	Would you like further training/explanation/workshop in any other areas of Development Control?	The majority of members were in favour of further training holding the view that we live in a continual learning environment. Specific training on new planning guidance, planning gain, commuted sums and how to deal with the public at meetings were the most common answers.
5.	Is there a pre-briefing before the Development Control Committee for officers and members?	Yes – for the Chairman and Vice Chairman but some members would like to be included when dealing with particularly contentious issues.

6.	Is the officer's advice clear, consistent and easy to understand?	On the whole those interviewed felt the presentations were usually clear but it could depend on the officer which is presenting the application.
7.	How would you describe the relationship that exists between the Councillors who sit on the Development Control Committee and the planning officers?	The majority of responses described the relationship as tense. Some responses detailed that individuals on the committee were responsible for this rather than the committee as a whole.
8.	Are the results of appeals reported back to you on a regular basis?	Yes – result of appeals are reported in committee minutes but on the whole members didn't seem to have the time to go through them and discuss what they could learn from them.
9.	Are there any issues that currently concern you with the operation of the Development Control function?	Responses included – committee is too large, enforcement issues, goal posts are constantly changed, the speed of applications can be a slow process, provision of open spaces, planning obligation, the officers and members relations are currently quite poor.
10.	What would you say were the Development Control Committee's main strengths?	Many of the responses included the fact that the committee was largely thought of as non-political, that there was a good Chairman, it has a Borough wide composition and good public participation in a Council function.
11.	What would you say were the Development Control Committee's main weaknesses?	Responses included - Committee is too large, lack of policy understanding, lack of appropriate training, personalities sometimes get in the way of progress.
12.	How is the view of the public who attend DC reported back to you e.g. is there a satisfaction survey available to them at every meeting?	There is currently no satisfaction survey used but members responses highlighted that on the whole they would be in favour of a system being used.

Outcome of Research from Speaking with Other Authorities (Statistical Neighbours) Regarding Relationship Between Planning & DC

AUTHORITIES: Lewes District Council; South Hams District Council, Worthing Borough Council

PLANNING OFFICERS: Mr. Lindsay Frost, Chief Planning Officer Lewes; Stephen Munday, Chief Planning Officer South Hams; James Appleton, Chief Planning Officer Worthing

CHAIRMEN: Mrs. Jo Lewry, Chairman, Planning Applications Committee Lewes; Mr. Geoffrey Fielden, Chairman Development Control Committee South Hams; Mr. John Livermore, Chairman Development Control Committee Worthing

Abbreviations: LF (Mr. Frost)
JA (Mr. Appleton)
SM (Mr. Munday)

Jo (Mrs. Lewry)
Geoff (Mr. Fielden)
John (Mr. Livermore)

QUESTIONS TO PLANNING OFFICERS

Question: How many planning decisions in a year have been overturned?

Answers

LF: 15-20 a year overturned by inspectors. Meet every 3 weeks on Planning Applications Committee. Three significant occasions, developments turned down by members and inspectors

SM: Recommendations overturned, one per meeting on average – Relatively small agenda at present – ten items per meeting, which occur once a month

JA: Have 1500 applications a year – twenty percent go to DC – which is 300 applications – of those probably 20 are overturned by members, and of those eighty to ninety percent of appeals are allowed

Question: Do you have a scheme of delegation and if so what percentage of decisions are dealt with by delegated authority?

Answers

LF: ninety-one to ninety-two percent delegated

SM: ninety percent delegated, but that includes an intermediate stage as well Applications with no objections, which are not contentious, are wholly delegated. Applications, which have ward or Parish objections but are not contentious issues, might be handled in an intermediate stage. This intermediate stage is a meeting between DC Chairman, Ward member (either on DC or not) and the Planning Officer. If a decision can be reached between these three, the application will not go forward to DC but is in effect delegated.

 JA: eighty percent delegated

Question: Are you aware of decisions overturned and of those how many were those which were delegated to officers?

Answers

LF: seventy percent of appeals in accord with planning authority – thirty percent of appeals allowed

 SM: N/A

 JA: appeal successes rate sixty-five to seventy percent on delegated

Question: Are you aware of the percentage of decisions overturned which were made by the Development Control Committee?

Answers

LF: higher proportion DC decisions – probably about twenty percent on appeal

SM: N/A

JA: of twenty against advice – eighty - ninety percent of appeals allowed

Question: Are you aware of the percentage of those decisions which were overturned, how many were decisions made by the Development Control Committee, which went against the advice of officers?

Answers

LF: No, committee went along with officer decisions

SM: N/A

JA: twenty

Question: Is there any induction training for Development Control members?

Answers

LF: yes – insist when first appointed – internal training – 14 DC members, but would like it to be 9 or 10

SM: yes

JA: yes – intensive induction training over two weeks, with two nights devoted to DC and planning policy

Question: Is there follow up training when new issues arise?

Answers

LF: yes on specific issues – primarily use outside trainers – grant money used for this

SM: yes – and more soon at request of members – had some design training recently

JA: not generally – tour of sites once a year – do have reports on emerging legislation

Question: Do councillors attend refresher- training courses?

Answers

LF: yes – on common issue – national policy planning guidance

SM: yes
JA: no courses

Question: Is training voluntary or mandatory?

Answers

LF: voluntary, but political group leaders on board and they arm twist

SM: mandatory for DC – have twenty DC members, about half of council size – seldom have substitutes therefore

JA: voluntary – but chairman says COME, so virtually mandatory

Question: How would you describe the relationship between councillors on the Development Control Committee and the officers who advise the Committee?

Answers

LF: Mixed – generally ok – 15-20 cases a year difference of opinion, doesn't bother me – had a few personal comments but rare – do need to have discussions outside of committee – two-third of members don't communicate with planning officers – need better communication

SM: good – having intermediate process helps

JA: very good – small committee of ten members – good chairman and vice-chairman – meet after committee meetings over a pint to discuss decisions – that way have better understanding of each other – meetings held 2:30 p.m. until finish then all go to pub together for a drink and discussion

Question: What works well in your current set up and what challenges does the function face in the future?

Answers

LF: works well: three weekly cycle; delegation ratio; committee focuses on cases that matter; good performance rate; speed – challenges: explaining planning decisions and system to public could use improvement; member training; better communication on application

SM: works well: delegation process challenges: old local plan and new members don't buy into those policies – very rural area – want more flexibility in decisions affecting change of use on farms

 JA: works well: delegation; video every site that goes to DC – no deferrals that way challenges: experienced staff; financial constraints; government targets

Question: Do you allow the public to address the Development Control Committee?

Answers

LF: yes – three speakers for and three against per application – two minutes each and ward councilor five minutes, also Parish councilor representative --- Outside context of any particular application, have annual meeting for pressure groups to explain culture changes from Central Government, explain planning system and how driven by Central Government – Parish Councillor training two times a year – Agents training one time a year – also quarterly meeting of group consisting of pressure groups, town and parish councils, agents, surveyors, architects, lawyers, disabled to discuss service improvements, design of leaflets, website, etc.

SM: yes – three minutes, one go only even if deferred or site visit – one person for and one person against allowed to speak on any application   (for info: they just got Beacon status on housing – 66% affordable new Greenfield sites, and 50% on windfall sites but threshold is low)

JA: not at moment but will be

QUESTIONS TO DC CHAIRMEN

Question: What training have you undertaken whilst a member of the Development Control Committee?

Answers

Jo: been on committee for 14 years and taken all training
Geoff: in house – I am a semi-retired chartered surveyor
John: had a little, not a lot – pick up as go along – always interested in planning – gave new members of committee training

Question: Do you feel the training has adequately prepared you to sit on the Development Control Committee?

Answers

Jo: some training worthwhile, some a waste of time – but overall yes
Geoff: helped a little, most gained by experience
John: some of committee have a lot to learn – rules of debate, rules of voting

Question: Do you think training should be mandatory or voluntary?

Answers

Jo: mandatory – without training you can't do job properly with complexities of today – training for substitutes as well
Geoff: mandatory
John: urged as important for new members – sometimes members seem to think that meetings are optional

Question: Would you like further training/explanation/workshop in any other areas of Development Control?

Answers

Jo: always willing but can't think of anything specific at this moment
Geoff: do have – had two sessions with CAVE – design
John: for new members

Question: Is there a pre-briefing before the Development Control Committee for officers and members?

Answers

Jo: Chairman and Vice Chairman and leader of opposition at briefings
Geoff: Chairman and Vice Chairman only not full committee
John: depends what's on agenda – for Chairman and Vice Chairman only on contentious issues

Question: Is the officer's advice clear, consistent and easy to understand?

Answers

Jo: yes our officers are extremely good
Geoff: yes
John: perfectly – don't always agree of course

Question: How would you describe the relationship that exists between the Councillors who sit on the Development Control Committee and the planning officers?

Answers

Jo: rather mixed – opposition have not got hang of calling officers prior to meetings – not enough cooperation with officers before a meeting – talking before would save awkward questions when public present at meetings (new members to committee have the problem)
Geoff: good
John: first class – brilliant team of planning officers – no problems whatsoever

Question: Are the results of appeals reported back to you on a regular basis?

Answers

Jo: yes monthly – very few appeals decisions upheld – most dismissed
Geoff: yes, monthly
John: every three weeks get notice of pending ones and ones done

Question: Are there any issues that currently concern you with the operation of the Development Control function?

Answers

Jo: no problems
Geoff: no not really – statistics up – hoping for another large grant
John: we wish inspectors would listen to DC more – DC knows what's best for Worthing

Question: What would you say were the Development Control Committee's main strengths?

Answers

Jo: insist visit the sites – insist read agendas fully! – work as a team – have a sit around informal meeting with all planning officers, DC chairman, vice chairman, leader of the opposition and cabinet member who is lead councilor for planning matters
Geoff: active within own areas – all very keen
John: impartiality – no party lines – don't work to time scale if it takes six hours it takes six hours – that's how long it takes

Question: What would you say were the Development Control Committee's main weaknesses?

Answers

Jo: a couple of members not listening – can't get through to some people – stupid questions
Geoff: members who talk too long!
John: less substitutes – get extra allowance for DC members – need consistency, same ten members each week

Question: How is the view of the public who attend DC reported back to you e.g. is there a satisfaction survey available to them at every meeting?

Answers

Jo: officers report back to people and on website – they'll talk to turned down applicants to try and work through problems
Geoff: send out things – six month meeting with people who use services with chairman and planning officers attending – include Parish – user groups include architects, surveyors, amenity groups
John: no – don't get many public

REPORT

FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT	PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY FORUM	21ST NOVEMBER 2005	6

INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER

Public/Exempt item

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

Summary

To present the key changes in the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit and the ways in which the changes will impact on the Council's Internal Audit Charter.

Recommendation/s

1. To consider the report.

2. To note the proposed amendments to the working methods and documentation of the Internal Audit Section.

3. To approve the revised Internal Audit Charter

Executive brief

The item falls within the following executive brief: Quality Services (Councillor John Coombes)

Continued....   34

<u>**Report**</u>

Introduction

1. At its meeting on 23 September 2002, the Policy & Resources Committee approved the existing Internal Audit Charter that sets out the purpose, authority and responsibilities of the Internal Audit team. The Charter commits Internal Audit to operating in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK (2000).

2. The CIPFA Good Practice Checklist relating to internal audit terms of reference suggests a review and update of the Charter at least every three years. This report is the result of such a review.

3. The main change in this area since the adoption of the initial Charter has been the issue of the CIPFA Audit Panel's updated 2003 version of the Code of Practice. The Head of Internal Audit has reviewed the Code and undertaken an assessment of the changes that need to be made to the Internal Audit Charter, the Internal Audit Code of Ethics and the Internal Audit Procedure Manual.

4. In many area of the revised Code the working practices at Fylde already meet the new standards, and no further changes will be required. However, there are some areas of the new Code that require consideration and these are outlined below. It is not proposed to seek committee approval for all the operational documents, but it is important for members to endorse the new Charter, which sets the framework for internal audit.

Proposed changes to working practices and documentation

Definition of Internal Audit

5. The revised CIPFA Code recognises that Internal Audit is not only an assurance function that provides an independent opinion on the control environment, but it may also undertake other work at the request of the parent organisation subject to the availability of skills and resources. This other work can include consultancy on issues such as risk management, control and corporate governance. The change in definition reflects the experiences of the Internal Audit team at Fylde, and it is proposed that the revised definition be included in the Charter and other documents.

Statutory Framework

6. The introduction to the revised CIPFA Code lists the legislation that establishes the requirement for Local Authorities to have an adequate and effective system of internal audit. The main change is the need to refer to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 in the Charter, which has been amended accordingly.

Head of Internal Audit

7. The qualification, status and role of the person responsible for managing the internal audit function are defined by the Code. The revised Charter reflects this description to ensure compliance.

Fraud and Corruption

8. The revised Code explicitly disconnects Internal Audit from any responsibility for preventing or detecting fraud and corruption, while recognising the liability of management. This situation is already set out clearly in the Council's Anti-Fraud Strategy and it will also be stated in the Charter to meet the CIPFA Standard.

Independence

9. The Internal Audit function at Fylde fully achieves the main requirements of the revised CIPFA Code in this area. In a new development to help ensure that long term responsibility for the audit of a particular aspect of an organisation does not impair an auditor's independence, the Code recommends that audit responsibilities be rotated within the audit team.

10. At Fylde, the majority of audits in the Strategic Audit Plan are shared between all members of the team to ensure no particular auditor undertakes the whole of any significant review. This helps to maintain the necessary impartiality and the Head of Internal Audit proposes to maintain the present arrangements.

Audit Planning

11. The revised CIPFA Code covers the means by which an organisation's risk management processes, if of sufficient quality, can help to inform the planning of the audit work to be undertaken. The Head of Internal Audit has already revised the Internal Audit planning methodology to reflect the Council's risk management strategy and this will also be included in the Charter.

Reporting to Members

12. For the first time the CIPFA Code covers in detail the relationship between Internal Audit and an Authority's Audit Committee or equivalent. At Fylde, the links between the Performance & Improvement Community Forum and the Head of Internal Audit are largely as recommended in the Code, particularly in terms of reporting to the Audit Committee. It is proposed that to ensure full compliance with the Standard reference will be made to the presentation of an annual opinion on the internal control environment in the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report.

Responsibilities in Other Organisations

13. The CIPFA Code refers to the issue of auditing those services operated by other organisations on behalf of the Council or by the Council for another organisation. Discretion is given about placing reliance on the opinions of other auditors, while reference is made to the need for internal audit access rights in the drafting of contracts and service level agreements. The revised Charter includes similar references in accordance with the Standard.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	No further implications arising from the report.
Legal	No further implications arising from the report.
Community Safety	No further implications arising from the report.
Human Rights and Equalities	No further implications arising from the report.
Sustainability	No further implications arising from the report.
Health & Safety and Risk Management	No further implications arising from the report.

REPORT AUTHOR	TEL	DATE	DOC ID
Savile Sykes	(01253) 658413	24th October 2005	Internal Audit Charter Report

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS		
NAME OF DOCUMENT	DATE	WHERE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION
Accounts & Audit Regulations	2003	All background papers or copies can be obtained from Savile Sykes – Head of Internal Audit on 01253 658413 or e-mail saviles@fylde.gov.uk

Attached documents

Appendix 'A' – Internal Audit Charter

INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER

Introduction

The purpose of the Internal Audit Charter is to set out the nature, role, responsibility, status and authority of internal audit within Fylde Borough Council, and to outline the scope of internal audit work.

Definition

Internal audit is an assurance function that primarily provides an independent and objective opinion to the organisation on the control environment comprising risk management, control and governance by evaluating its effectiveness in achieving the organisation's objectives. It objectively examines, evaluates and reports on the adequacy of the control environment as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources.

Statutory Framework

Internal audit is a statutory function. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 place the Council under a duty to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the Council's accounting records and control systems.

The Finance Unit Business Manager is the designated officer with statutory responsibility for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs (Section 151 - Local Government Act 1972). The Head of Internal Audit will have a direct line reporting arrangement to the responsible Section 151 Officer.

Audit Standards

The Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government 2003 published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy will serve as the basis for all internal audit activities and arrangements.

Scope of Internal Audit

The scope of internal audit allows for unrestricted coverage of the authority's activities and unrestricted access to all records, personnel, property and assets deemed necessary in the course of an audit. Such access shall be granted on demand and not subject to advance notice. There are no limitations placed upon the scope of internal audit work.

In addition, internal audit has the right of unrestricted access to:

- the Chief Executive
- the Executive Directors
- the Section 151 Officer
- the Monitoring Officer
- Chair of the audit committee or equivalent
- individual Unit Business Managers

Internal audit has the right to require and receive explanations from all employees or Council members concerning any matter under consideration.

Head of Internal Audit

The Head of Internal Audit is the most senior audit officer of the Council and should:

- be a professionally qualified and experienced auditor
- be of sufficient status to permit effective discussion and negotiation on the results of audit work with senior management
- hold a position in the organisation that reflects the influence of the post on the internal control environment
- report to and be managed at corporate management team level

Internal Audit Responsibility

The main areas of internal audit responsibility within the authority are to:

1. Review, appraise and report on:

    ◆   the soundness, adequacy and effectiveness of the system of internal controls
    ◆   the application of good practice in corporate governance and the management of risk
    ◆   the operations in place to establish and monitor the achievement of the Council's objectives
    ◆   the adequacy of arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources
    ◆   the suitability and reliability of financial and other management data, including aspects of performance management
    ◆   compliance with corporate policies, procedures, controls and regulations
    ◆   compliance with government legislation and statutory obligations
    ◆   the extent to which the assets and interests are accounted for and safeguarded from loss

2. Provide assurance that key risks are being managed effectively and that appropriate controls are in place.

3. Conduct special projects that make a material contribution to the achievement of the Council's aims and objectives. The nature and scope of the work may include facilitation, process design, problem-solving, training, consultancy and advisory services, but this list is not exhaustive.

4. Assist management in the investigation of fraud and irregularity, with the exception of housing and council tax benefit fraud and irregularity, which is routinely investigated by the benefit review unit.

Internal audit is not responsible for the activities that it audits or reviews. The existence of internal audit does not diminish the responsibility of management to establish systems of internal control to ensure that activities are conducted in a secure, efficient and well-ordered manner.

Statement on Internal Control

To comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003, the Council is required to produce a statement on internal control with the financial statements. This statement details the Authority's position on internal control, including the arrangements for the management of risk, as well as outlining the actions that will be undertaken over the coming year to ensure that the prescribed controls are operating effectively.

The production of the statement is helped by the work of internal audit. Internal audit reports contain opinions on the overall management of risks and the adequacy and effectiveness of controls under review. The Statement on Internal Control prepared by the Section 151 Officer is signed by the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council.

Internal Audit and Risk Management

Unit Business Managers are responsible for the day-to-day management of business risks. This will be underpinned by the Council's Risk Register, which will be aligned to the Corporate Plan and business planning processes.

As an independent appraisal function internal audit's role is to assist managers in this process by evaluating risk in the areas under review, providing assurance wherever possible and making recommendations to optimise levels of control.

Fraud and Corruption

Internal audit does not have responsibility for the prevention or detection of fraud and corruption. Managing this risk is the responsibility of management.

Internal auditors should always be alert in their work to the risks and exposures that could allow fraud or corruption to occur. The Head of Internal Audit should consider all suspected or detected internal fraud, corruption or impropriety and evaluate the implications for the internal control environment.

Independence of Internal Audit

The main determinant of the effectiveness of internal audit is that it is seen to be independent. To ensure this, internal audit will operate within a framework that allows:

- unrestricted access to senior management
- reporting in its own name
- segregation from line operations.

Every effort will be made to preserve objectivity by ensuring that all audit members of staff are free from any conflicts of interest and do not undertake any non-audit duties. Individual auditors will make an annual declaration of outside interests in accordance with the Code of Ethics and the Head of Internal Audit will review such declarations and take appropriate action to minimise the risk of conflict.

Due Care

The Head of Internal Audit is responsible for ensuring that audit staff maintain appropriate standards of due care in completing audit assignments. Essential to this requirement is the audit procedure manual, which is kept current by regular review. The manual provides guidance on overall quality of work and performance standards to be achieved. Feedback on quality and effectiveness is also actively sought from clients.

In performing their duties internal auditors must act with integrity and fulfil their responsibilities with honesty, fairness and truthfulness. They must also safeguard information they receive in performing their duties. To ensure this, a Code of Ethics has been developed for internal audit. The Head of Internal Audit will ensure that audit personnel are regularly reminded of their ethical responsibilities under the code and also ensure that declarations of interest are maintained and updated where appropriate.

Audit Training

The Head of Internal Audit will carry out a review of the development and training needs of all audit personnel principally through the staff appraisal and development process. Training provision will be targeted to individual training needs and reflect the changing audit environment.

Audit Relationships

The Head of Internal Audit must develop and sustain a wide range of good working relationships with management and staff, external auditors, members, inspectorates, neighbouring local authority auditors, and other external bodies or partners.

The basis and nature of the main relationships are:

- management - a privileged relationship based on mutual trust and support within the context of internal audit independence and the code of ethics
- staff – a constructive working relationship comprising ongoing dialogue between auditor and auditee throughout the audit process
- external auditor – a co-operative relationship founded on mutual recognition and respect designed to ensure that scarce resources are used as effectively as possible and address the areas of highest risk
- members – a working relationship intended to provide members with the opportunity to contribute to the process for maintaining effective internal control, principally through the performance and improvement community forum acting as the audit committee
- inspectorates – a relationship for the exchange of dialogue and information, sufficient to allow audit to comment where proposals may affect internal control

- neighbouring internal auditors – a professional relationship for networking and sharing best practice, through the forum of the Lancashire Districts Audit Group

Audit Resources

The staffing structure of the team will reflect the high calibre of staff required and comprise in general a mix of qualified, technician and trainee posts.

As far as is practicable, Internal Audit will not participate in the day-to-day operation of any systems of internal financial control. Members of the internal audit team will be expected to contribute to the general management and conduct of business through membership of working groups and participation in ad hoc exercises, so long as this does not impair the delivery of the core audit service.

Audit Planning

The Head of Internal Audit will be required to manage the provision of a complete audit service to the authority. In discharge of this duty the Head of Internal Audit will:

- seek to direct audit resources to areas presenting the highest risk to the authority by reference principally to the corporate risk register
- establish effective communication and co-ordination with the Audit Commission and take account of their comments and findings in planning audit work
- ensure that all financial and other significant systems and processes are taken into account when determining where to direct audit work
- maintain a strategic plan to take account of the whole range of activities undertaken by the authority that would be suitable for audit review on a cyclical basis
- prepare an annual plan combining high risk areas with the strategic plan elements for formal agreement by the Overview & Scrutiny Unit Business Manager
- present the approved annual plan for endorsement by the Section 151 Officer and the management team
- bring the annual plan to the attention of the performance improvement community forum
- move increasingly to a risk-based audit plan as risk management becomes fully embedded and incorporates operational risks

Assignment Reporting

All audit assignments and studies will be the subject of formal reports. Draft reports will be sent to the managers responsible for the area under review for agreement to the findings and the proposed action plan. Auditees must respond promptly to audit reports within a reasonable timescale determined by management team. Auditee comments may be used to amend the draft report if appropriate.

Following the closure meeting managers shall specify agreement with each of the audit findings and recommendations or supply reasons for disagreement. They must provide a reasonable timetable for implementing solutions to identified problems.

After agreement, the reports will be issued to the manager of the business unit under review with a copy sent to the Finance Manager, Overview and Scrutiny Unit Business Manager, members of the Executive Board and the authority's external auditors. A copy of each report will also be placed in the member's arena, with the exception of fraud investigation reports. All audit reports will be formally followed up to monitor implementation of agreed actions.

Reporting to Members

In accordance with the Council's constitution the Head of internal Audit will report triennially to the Performance and Improvement Community Forum acting as the audit committee. In one such report to members during the year the Head of Internal Audit will deliver an audit opinion on the overall effectiveness of the internal control environment.

Responsibilities in Other Organisations

Where key systems are being operated or services provided by another organisation on behalf of the Council or by the Council for another organisation, the Head of Internal Audit will determine whether to conduct assurance work directly or rely on the opinions of other auditors.

The Head of Internal Audit will advise as necessary on the provision of relevant access rights in the drafting of relevant contracts and service level agreements.

Quality Control

The Head of Internal Audit will undertake a review of all completed audit assignments to ensure the quality of audit work, compliance with the Charter and Code of Ethics, compliance with the audit manual and the achievement of audit standards and performance indicators.

As part of internal audit's quality monitoring and continuous improvement process, satisfaction surveys will be issued following each agreed audit report to enable the manager and their staff to provide feedback on the audit assignment. Other surveys of audit clients will be conducted periodically to enhance overall understanding of customer needs and opinions.

The Head of Internal Audit will review the responses to both satisfaction and audit client surveys, and take appropriate action where necessary. Results of such surveys will be reported to the performance and improvement community forum.

REPORT

FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUSINESS UNIT	**PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT FORUM**	**21ST NOVEMBER 2005**	**7**

STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL

Public/Exempt item

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

Summary

The Council has to demonstrate that its control environment enables it to manage significant business risks. To aid this process an annual statement is produced. This was presented to the Council at its meeting on 28 July 2005 as part of the report on the Accounts. However, there is a role for this Forum in keeping the issue under review, with particular reference to the Corporate Governance and Internal Control Action Plan 2005-06.

Recommendation/s

1. That the Performance Improvement Forum reviews the Statement of Internal Control, together with the 2006/06 Action Plan, and satisfies itself that activity is being undertaken to effectively manage the council's internal control environment.

Executive brief

The item falls within the following executive brief: Quality Services (Councillor John Coombes).

Continued....

<u>Report</u>

1. Fylde Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

2. In discharging the overall responsibility, Fylde Borough Council is also responsible for maintaining a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

3. The system of internal control is designed to manage rather than eliminate the risk of failure to achieve these objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of its effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to:

◆   identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives;

◆   evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised;

◆   manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

4. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 introduced a mandatory requirement for all Councils to produce a statement of internal control. This statement must show the council's current position on internal control as well as outlining the actions, which will be undertaken over the coming years to ensure the prescribed controls are operating effectively.

5. The Statement on the Systems of Internal Control, together with a Corporate Governance and Internal Control Action Plan 2005-06, were considered by the Council at its meeting on 28 July, as a part of the accounts report.

6. However, there is a need for an appropriate member group to keep the Statement of Internal Control Action Plan under review and at present, this activity would fall under the remit of this Forum.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	No further implications arising from this report.
Legal	No further implications arising from this report.
Community Safety	No further implications arising from this report.
Human Rights and Equalities	No further implications arising from this report.
Sustainability	No further implications arising from this report.
Health & Safety and Risk Management	No further implications arising from this report.

REPORT AUTHOR	TEL	DATE	DOC ID
Tracy Scholes (for SS)	(01253) 658521	27th October 2005	Statement of Internal Control Report

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS		
NAME OF DOCUMENT	DATE	WHERE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION
None	N/A	N/A

Attached documents

Appendix 'A' - Statement of Internal Control Action Plan

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE & INTERNAL CONTROL - ACTION PLAN 2005-06 – Appendix 'A'

Ref	Action	Source of Assurance	Respons-ible Officer/s	Target Date	Complete Date	Comment
1	Consolidate existing procedures within a protocol to monitor the implementation of recommendations agreed with external inspectors and the Audit Commission	▪ Reports to Corporate Management Team ▪ Reports to Scrutiny	Exec Dir.	Dec. 05		Responses to and action plans developed following inspections to be approved by Executive Committee and incorporated into the service and corporate planning framework.
2	Further enhance arrangements for member development by introducing a structured induction scheme for new members and training for committee chairs	▪ New member induction scheme ▪ Training for committee chairs	I Curtis	May 07		The induction training needs to be in place for the next election"
3	Assign responsibility for corporate governance and internal control issues within the terms of reference of a relevant member committee	▪ Committee terms of reference ▪ Reports on governance and control to responsible committee ▪ Committee minutes show responsibility adequately discharged	I Curtis	Dec 05		The present terms of reference of the executive committee include all matters not expressly reserved to full council. It therefore necessarily includes all of the matters covered by this item. The constitution is presently being revised in conjunction with a move to an executive system. These matters will be picked up in that process.
4	Formally communicate corporate governance and internal control issues to employees, members, the public and other stakeholders	▪ Evidence of dissemination (e.g. briefings, accessible on intranet site)	S Sykes	Nov 05		Website/Intranet Text completed for MT approval.
5	Implement the Employees Code of Conduct and establish the registers of interests required by the code	▪ Code of Conduct agreed with Trade Unions ▪ Employees signed acceptances ▪ Registers of Interest established	LCh/ IC	Nov 05		Joint Consultative Committee meeting 22nd November

Proposal	Review

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE & INTERNAL CONTROL - ACTION PLAN 2005-06 – Appendix 'A'

Ref	Action	Source of Assurance	Respons-ible Officer/s	Target Date	Complete Date	Comment
6	Assign responsibility to the Monitoring Officer for providing assurance that all relevant legislative change has been identified, communicated, implemented, and followed	• Monitoring Officer's job description • Evidence of assurance given to Chief Executive that all relevant legislative changes have been reported and addressed	LCh/ IC	Dec 05		JD to be reviewed following review of management structure.
7	Maintain a central record of complaints against the authority, as defined in the Customer Care Policy, together with evidence of corrective action taken in response to such complaints	• Central register of complaints exists • Supporting documentation available • Evidence of corrective action taken	I Curtis	April 06		There would be merit in reviewing the complaints system in conjunction with this work"
8	Report to committee on a regular basis with a summary complaints received and addressed, including an analysis of the outcomes	• Evidence of regular reporting of complaints to members and associated actions	I Curtis	April 06		There would be merit in reviewing the complaints system in conjunction with this work"
9	Revise the service planning template to require the matching of service objectives with associated budgets	• Revised service planning template exists • Budget and service objectives aligned	P Woodw	Dec.05		Service Planning template to be reviewed through the 2005 staff workshops.
10	Provide regular budget monitoring reports to senior management - capital and revenue, current year and medium term	• Regular budget monitoring reports to corporate management team – capital and revenue, current year and medium term	B White	30.09.05	30.09.05	Regular monitoring reports being produced and quarterly reporting to Cttee. Capital monitoring also via Asset Mgt Group.
11	Report risk issues to members on a regular and frequent basis	• Evidence of regular and frequent reporting of risk issues to members	PN/AW	Dec 05		Member Champions sit on both the strategic and operational risk groups. Appropriate issues will be fed through to Community Forums and Exec Committee via Management Team

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE & INTERNAL CONTROL - ACTION PLAN 2005-06 – Appendix 'A'

	Proposal				Review	
Ref	Action	Source of Assurance	Respons-ible Officer/s	Target Date	Complete Date	Comment
12	Assign responsibilities for obligations in relation to risk management, internal control and implementing relevant legislation in the generic job descriptions of Unit Business Managers	▪ Job descriptions of Unit Business Managers outline responsibilities for risk management, internal control and implementing legislation	LCh	Dec. 05		JDs to be reviewed following review of management structure.
13	Undertake an annual review of risk at service/operational level within all business units	▪ Evidence of annual review of risk at service/operational level	P Norris/ All UBMs	Dec 05		Strategic and operational risk reviewed at regular meetings of Risk Management Groups and annually by Management Team
14	Develop business/service continuity plans covering all critical service areas	▪ Business/service continuity plans exist covering all critical service areas	C Platt/ All UBMs	Nov 05		Action plan developed to ensure bsuiness continuity plans are in place
15	Establish a robust mechanism to ensure that an Action Plan is agreed to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement in corporate governance and internal control	▪ Action Plan is drawn up and approved ▪ Actions are communicated and responsibilities assigned ▪ Target dates included in action plan ▪ Ongoing review of progress	D Joy	20.09.05	20.09.05	Standing Performance item on MT agenda.
16	Assign responsibility for compiling and reporting the Statement on Internal Control	▪ Documented key responsibilities	Exec Board	Dec.05		To be addressed as part of review of management structure.