

56/05 - **INTERIM AUDIT:** The Audit Manager (Audit Commission), submitted a written report, which set out the results of the Audit Commission's work in respect of two areas of the Council's responsibility, namely the financial aspects of corporate governance and the review of core processes. The Audit Manager referred to page 5 of the report which set out the main conclusions and referred to paragraphs 8, 9, 10 and 11, updating on each paragraph in turn.

In relation to paragraph 8 regarding the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements, it was noted that the work had now been completed. Members noted paragraphs 10 and 11 with satisfaction. In relation to paragraph 9, the required set of procedures for disseminating new legislation which should be formalised through the development of a set protocol, the Chair invited the Chief Solicitor to refer to work undertaken in this regard. The Chief Solicitor advised that some of this work had been undertaken through the annual client's survey by the Council's Legal Section. As a result of the feedback from that survey, a protocol would be produced, which would address the issues and difficulties in relation to the volume and regularity of the emergence of new legislation. It was noted that there were possibly issues in this regard for elected Members in terms of briefings to make sense of the new legislation, such as the Freedom of Information Act which may not affect Members directly, may affect staff and their volume of work, which Members should be aware of. For example, the Chief Solicitor advised that there were some firms in operation which used the Freedom of Information Act to require Council staff and employees to provide information which could then used as a marketing tool.

Councillor Theakston then referred to the use of the term "risk", and queried the definition of that term. Members considered certain examples of risks, such as falling trees and leaves, and the risk to the Council as a result. The Chief Solicitor confirmed that there was a significant level of risk from falling trees and the Council was currently considering procedures to minimise it. The risk of injury to the public from falling leaves would not generally need any special steps to be taken; the Council's possible financial liabilities would be covered by insurance.

The Committee asked the Chief Solicitor to investigate whether the Council could share arrangements for reviewing and communicating changes in the law, and the Chief Solicitor agreed to do so.

Members queried how recommendations contained within the Action Plan were picked up through the authority, and it was noted that such recommendations were addressed via the Audit Committee, the Council's Internal Audit Section and, to some extent, the Council's Department of Corporate Policy and Improvement.

(6.15 pm – 6.38 pm)