

## **EXETER CITY COUNCIL**

### **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY 10 MARCH 2009**

#### **EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S ARRANGEMENTS FOR MANAGING RISKS FROM WASTE MANAGEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report advises Members of the outcome of the recently completed Auditor's review of arrangements for managing the risks posed by waste management and climate change, and to the extent at which those risks are being managed, and seeks Members' support for the action plan contained in the review.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In the 2007-08 Audit Plan completed by the auditors Grant Thornton, a number of risks were identified to the Council, which included the challenges presented by changing Government requirements in relation to waste management and climate change.
- 2.2 These subject areas are of great importance; waste management is one of the most visible frontline services provided by local authorities, and, over a number of years, there has been a significant shift from merely removing waste from households towards better resource management, through recycling and re-use. Since 1990, National and European legislation has been introduced that requires waste collection authorities to implement a range of policies and practices for re-using, recycling, and recovering energy from a significant proportion of waste collected and sent for disposal.
- 2.3 The issue of climate change is also high on the agenda of many organisations, and the effects of climate change are and will be significant unless the factors which contribute to climate change, such as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, are checked. As well as limiting its own impact on climate change in its operation, the Council should be seen as being at the forefront of local efforts, in its community leadership role, in tackling climate change issues.
- 2.4 The review sought to understand the Council's arrangements for identifying the key issues, for meeting the developing waste management and climate change targets and for identifying and managing the associated risks. It was conducted in the Autumn of 2008, and is attached as Appendix I.

#### **3. CONCLUSIONS OF REVIEW**

##### **Waste Management**

- 3.1 The Auditor concluded that the Council has in place an appropriate strategy and objectives/targets, which recognise the changing legislation and consequent changing demands on the Council, and its partners, in respect of recycling and waste reduction. It noted that the strategy and objectives/targets are revisited annually, with appropriate Member involvement.

- 3.2 However, the review also highlighted that there is an opportunity for the Council to be far more thorough in identifying all the strategic and operational risks relating to waste management, including reputational and financial, and to be clear about the arrangements in place to minimise these risks. It recommended that the corporate and departmental risk registers relating to waste management are expanded.

### **Climate Change**

- 3.3 The Auditor was satisfied that the Council has made good progress in establishing sound arrangements for addressing the issues of climate change. It noted that the Council has clear strategies and monitoring arrangements, and has engaged officers and Members in the monitoring and review process. The report commented that the Council has recognised its role as a community leader and is therefore seeking to influence the habits of individuals and organisations within its boundaries; and that is also concerned to initiate measures to reduce its own carbon footprint.
- 3.4 As with waste management, the audit report considered that the issue of strengthening risk management, is also relevant to climate change. It recommended that the Council further enhance its risk management arrangements, by ensuring that all relevant strategic and operational risks are identified within the Corporate Risk Register, and then ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to mitigate those risks.

### **Recommendation of Auditor's Review**

- 3.5 The Auditor recommended that the Council should identify fully the risks associated with its waste management and climate change action plans, and ensure that mitigating controls are in place for each risk identified.

## **4. PROPOSED ACTION PLAN**

- 4.1 In response to the Auditor's recommendation, the Head of Environmental Health Services will ensure that detailed risk registers will be formulated for each theme, with significant risks identified within the corporate risk register (the latter being subject to monitoring by Scrutiny Committees).
- 4.2 Stewardship of the Climate Change risk register will rest with Climate Change Steering Group, whereas the Head of Environmental Health Services will be responsible for the stewardship of the recycling/waste management risk register, which will also be incorporated into the annual report on the Council's Recycling Plan.
- 4.1 A target completion date of March 2009 has been set for these risk registers to be finalised.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no additional financial implications imposed by carrying out these recommendations.

## **7. RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) Scrutiny Committee - Community notes the Auditor's report, and supports the action plan contained within it (Appendix A of the report).

## HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

S:PA/LP/ Committee/309SCC8  
24.2.09

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)  
Background papers used in compiling this report:**