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**To**  
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

16<sup>th</sup> April, 2008

**Subject**  
Scrutiny Chairs' Quarterly Reports - Scrutiny Board 1

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### 1 Purpose of the Note

To inform the Committee of the work of Scrutiny Board 1 (Finance, Procurement and Value for Money/Customer, Workforce and Legal Services) during the period January to March 2008, together with the recommendations and other outcomes of this work.

### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the information contained in this briefing note and to consider any further action.

### 3 Information/Background

#### *Activity*

The Board held four meetings during this period, one of which was additional to the scheduled meetings. This was needed in order to accommodate the review of one Cabinet Member Plan and one of the sessions with a particular service area relating to sickness absence.

Issues considered by the Board over the period were as follows:-

**Cabinet Member Plans – half-year reviews.** The Board met informally to plan the lines of questioning for the Cabinet Members and then met them on 30<sup>th</sup> January (Finance, Procurement and Funding for Money) and 6<sup>th</sup> February (Customer and Workforce Services) to discuss the reviews of their Plans.

**Sickness absence.** The Board considered this issue on a number of occasions:-

- In February, the Board was given a progress report on the recommendations it had made after its meeting with Cabinet Members and Directors in February 2007.
- In March, the Board considered the Cabinet report on the third quarter sickness absence monitoring. The Board were concerned that levels had increased when compared with the same quarter last year.
- The Board held informal meetings with the Chief Executive, the Director of Children, Learning and Young People and the Director of City Development, to discuss the

levels of sickness absence in those service areas in their directorates where sickness absence is particularly high.

**Housing Benefits Improvement Plan** – the Board considered the third quarter progress report on this Plan.

**ICT, Coventry Direct, Serco contract.** In March, the Board considered and noted the Cabinet report on the progress being made on these issues.

**Task and Finish Group - Guidelines for Bailiffs.** This Group, which was set up by the Board in November 2007, submitted its report on its work to the Board in March. The Group had produced a revised set of guidelines for bailiffs aimed particularly at their work with vulnerable people. The Board endorsed the Group's work.

**Audit Sub-Group.** The Sub-Group held three meetings, one of which was an additional meeting (in February).

The issues considered at each meeting were:-

**28th January** - Internal Audit Service Activity quarter three progress, Internal Audit Service recommendation tracking, annual review of the effectiveness of the system of Internal Audit update, the Cabinet quarter 2 report on revenue and capital monitoring and the 2006/2007 External Audit Use of Resources Assessment.

**25<sup>th</sup> February** - the Cabinet quarter 3 report on revenue and capital monitoring and two reports of the External Auditors (the Opinion Audit Plan and a progress report on the 2005/2006 Audit and Inspection Plan).

**31st March** - the draft internal audit plan 2008/2009, the draft corporate fraud plan 2008/2009, the process for producing the annual governance statement 2007/2008, an update on the corporate risk register, the proposed scope for the Audit Commission review of Coventry Direct (which had been requested by the Sub-Group) and the Audit Commission report on network security.

### ***Recommendations***

**Task and Finish Group - Guidelines for Bailiffs** - the Board agreed to recommend the Cabinet Member (Finance, Procurement and Value for Money) to adopt the revised guidelines.

### ***Other outcomes from issues considered***

**Cabinet Member Plans** – the Board asked officers to supply more information on a number of issues, including some of the Access to Employment Action Plans, the work of the Client Support Unit and statistics relating to disabled employees, assaults on employees and the Benefits Express bus.

**Sickness Absence** - the Board asked officers to investigate what the levels of sickness were in other public sector bodies and how they were dealing with this issue.

In 2008/2009, the Board will continue to give a high profile to trying to improve sickness absence levels, including examining progress in those service areas where levels have been particularly high.

**Housing Benefits Improvement Plan** - the Board will continue to monitor progress during 2008/2009.

**ICT, Coventry Direct, Serco contract** - the Board will continue to monitor progress during 2008/2009.

**Task and Finish Group - Guidelines for Bailiffs** – the Group will meet again in September 2008 to examine how the new guidelines have been working.

**Audit Sub-Group** - the Sub-Group held an informal meeting to do more work on measuring its own effectiveness. It agreed an improvement action plan, to be implemented in 2008/2009. It also agreed to ask the Constitution Working Group to look at possible future arrangements for audit.

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