

REPORT

TO: Corporate Services Committee

FROM: Tim King

SUBJECT: **Chairperson's Report** - Report prepared for meeting of 15 October 2009

The Auditors have been camped upstairs for the last few weeks and as Murray has highlighted in his report we anticipate receiving a clean audit report. While this should be the expectation every year it is still credit to all the staff who are involved in the process of managing Council's finances throughout the year and in providing all the information and answers to questions that the Auditors have in the preparation of the Annual report.

Congratulations to Murray on his appointment to the SOLGM Accounting standards group. It is a good reflection on both the individuals and the Council that a number of our staff are involved in various national working groups on a wide range of issues.

The call on funds from Riskpool is an issue that we need to keep a close eye on with the huge liabilities facing a number of councils in relation to leaky buildings. We would not want to see that having a massive impact on our ratepayers. It is of course one of the risks of a shared risk arrangement but never-the-less we await with interest further updates on the impact of these liabilities on Riskpool.

The last issue I want to touch on is how to support staff to use their discretion when dealing with the public on issues like consents, engineering standards, etc. I have been involved in a couple of recent cases where reading the rules as written have led to some potential outcomes right out of proportion to what is being proposed. It comes back to the fact that when we make rules we cannot foresee all the circumstances where they may be triggered and over time they end up impacting in ways the Council may never have anticipated. One way around this is for staff to feel empowered to use their professional judgement in these circumstances. As with everything once a level of judgement is encouraged there is likely to be the odd occasion where it goes wrong, however, in my opinion, in order to help most people it is reasonable to accept the potential downside. I believe that you have professional staff for a reason and because we cannot foresee every eventuality and to change the rules and regulations all the time is time consuming and costly, we need to find a way to back people to make calls, trust their judgement, and not be held back by a fear that mistakes will be jumped on from a great height I am interested in feedback from both staff and councillors if and how this can be achieved.

Tim King
Chair
Corporate Services Committee