Dear Councillor

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - WEDNESDAY, 8 JULY 2026

I am now able to enclose for consideration at the above meeting the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda Item No.

1. MINUTES (Pages 3 - 10)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 June 2026.

This page is intentionally left blank

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE held in CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, CAMBS, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 17 June 2026.

PRESENT:	Councillor P J Hodgson-Jones – Chair. Councillors S Claffey, R Ioannides, R Martin, G Seeff and M Young.
APOLOGIES:	Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R Coogan, J Gray and H Tobias.
SUBSTITUTES:	Councillor R Ioannides substituted for Councillor R Coogan and Councillor R Martin substituted for Councillor J Gray.
IN ATTENDANCE	Councillor S Ferguson and Councillor J Harvey.

66. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 18 March 2026 and 21 May 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

67. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

68. CHANGE TO CONSTITUTION: ADOPTION OF NATIONAL SCHEME OF DELEGATION OF DECISIONS ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) setting out recommendations to approve a variation to Part 3 - Responsibility for Functions of the Council's Constitution to reflect recent statutory changes to the planning system, particularly the introduction of a National Scheme of Delegation (NSoD) and revised limits on Planning Committee size. It also highlighted the broader context of national planning reform, local peer review recommendations, and Local Government Reorganisation, all of which support improving efficiency, effectiveness, and delivery of growth through planning decisions.

The Head of Planning, Infrastructure and Public Protection introduced the report and invited questions from the Committee.

Councillor S Ferguson addressed the Committee and raised concerns regarding the reduction in elected Member influence over planning decisions, the removal of automatic call-in provisions, the constitutional implications of delegating authority for future

amendments to officers, and the proposed reduction in Development Management Committee (DMC) potentially impacting representation of smaller Political Groups. He suggested limiting delegated constitutional changes to amendments that were strictly necessary to comply with statutory guidance and that any discretionary changes to the local scheme of delegation Member referral arrangements or the role of nominated Members or Committee composition or wider planning governance must return to the Corporate Governance Committee and Council for approval. He also asked whether the Council would write to the Minister of State to express concerns about the cumulative reduction in elected Member oversight, the impact on smaller political groups and the need to preserve transparent local democracy democratic accountability within the new national framework.

The Head of Planning, Infrastructure and Public Protection advised that the national scheme was statutory and must be implemented, and that any discretionary changes beyond statutory requirements would follow the Council's established governance processes. Furthermore, she noted that the proposed DMC size reflected the maximum permitted under national guidance. However, she acknowledged the concerns raised and indicated that further discussions could take place with the Monitoring Officer where required.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Head of Planning, Infrastructure and Public Protection advised that Officers would develop a referrals process with DMC and ensure it had legal oversight and was robust, but whilst being careful of not going beyond what was within scope because that would leave the Council open to challenge by way of judicial review as the referral process in itself was part of the decision-making pathway.

The Committee raised concerns regarding the extent of the delegated authority proposed, the lack of detailed information on specific constitutional amendments, and the potential democratic impacts such as reduced representation and oversight.

A Motion for a recorded vote having succeeded, the Committee considered recommendation 1, to endorse a variation to Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions of the Council's Constitution to reflect the changes required under the Statutory National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions due to come into force on 31st October 2026 (unless amended) to amend the membership of the Development Management Committee to reduce the size of the Committee from 16 to 13 Members. On being put to the vote Councillors Claffey, Hodgson-Jones and Martin voted in favour and Councillors Ioannides, Seef and Young voted against it. The motion was, therefore, tied. The Chair used his casting vote in favour, and the motion was, therefore, carried.

The motion for a recorded vote having succeeded, the Committee considered recommendation 2, to endorse the delegated authority as set out in Article 15 of the Constitution for the Monitoring Officer to ensure the Constitution is amended to reflect the changes impacted by the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions. On being put to the vote, Councillor Seeff voted in favour, Councillors

Claffey, Ioannides, Martin and Young voted against, and Councillor Hodgson Jones abstained. The motion was therefore declared to be lost.

The motion for a recorded vote having succeeded, the Committee considered recommendation 3, to endorse the recommendation to delegate any future amendments (where necessary) to the Constitution in line with the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, and any successor documents to the Head of Planning, Infrastructure and Public protection in consultation with the Council's Monitoring Officer, Chair of Development Management Committee and Portfolio Holder for Planning. On being put to the vote Councillor Seeff voted in favour and Councillors Claffey, Hodgson-Jones, Ioannides, Martin and Young voted against. The motion was therefore declared to be lost.

The motion for a recorded vote having succeeded, the Committee considered recommendation 4, to note the direction of travel as a result of the National Scheme of Delegation, in combination with the recommendations of the Planning Peer Review, and forthcoming structural change through Local Government Reorganisation; and consider how the Constitution Review Working Group wishes to consider, discuss and bring forward other amendments to the HDC Scheme of Delegation for Planning, and other Constitutional changes relating to Planning matters; in the interests of improving efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making on Planning matters and Planning service delivery. On being put to the vote, Councillor Seeff voted in favour, Councillors Claffey, Ioannides, Martin and Young voted against, and Councillor Hodgson-Jones abstained. The motion was therefore declared to be lost.

Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee endorsed a variation to Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions of the Council's Constitution to reflect the changes required under the Statutory National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions due to come into force on 31st October 2026 (unless amended) to amend the membership of the Development Management Committee to reduce the size of the committee from 16 to 13 Members.

69. APPROVAL FOR PUBLICATION OF DRAFT 2025/26 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) completing the processes for publishing the Council's unaudited Statement of Accounts for 2025/26.

The Head of Finance introduced the report, noting that the Council had delivered a strong outturn which reflected continued prudent financial management in what remained a challenging and uncertain environment. The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources echoed the comments made by the Head of Finance and thanked Officers for their work in producing the documents.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Executive

Councillor for Finance and Resources advised that there had been a new internal audit provision over the previous 14 months who had done a lot of work looking at areas where extra reassurance was requested. Furthermore, it was important to know internal audit were looking at areas where there was work to be done to improve, to ensure the Council was doing what it should be doing.

The Head of Internal Audit, Dan Harris of RSM advised that they had not concluded through their work that any fraudulent activity had occurred and had not identified any fraud through the 2025/26 internal audit program. RSM had agreed a comprehensive program of work as a result of a prior year where there had not been enough work, therefore they had delivered more audits than they might have expected to do. Some areas had not been reviewed in recent years, and some areas were being looked at that through legislation had not been looked at before. He was satisfied that the key messages through his opinion had flowed through to the Annual Governance Statement.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Head of Finance advised that significant work had been done regarding IFRS 16, which was an area that she had brought some expertise to the Council. She was not aware that the Auditors had concerns with professional valuers Wilkes, Head and Eves' (WHE) methodology of valuations. Significant work had taken place with WHE to ensure those valuations were accurate and that new requirements had been met and complied with.

A question from the Committee was raised around the sum currently left for Community Infrastructure Levy applications, an answer to which would be circulated following the meeting.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Corporate Director – Finance and Resources advised that the figure in the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) reserves was to fund additional resources that may be needed internally, as there was a large amount of work necessary, particularly around the alignment of accounts. Until a decision was made by the Government, it was uncertain which route the Council would take and what resources would be needed to support other services that would be required as a result.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee

(1) considered and approved the Annual Governance Statement (Appendix 1);

(2) considered and approved the unaudited Statement of Accounts for 2025/26 (Appendix 2); and

(3) considered and approved the Notice of Publication (Appendix 3).

70. EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) presenting the draft Annual Planning Report for the external audit work that EY will carry out in respect of the 2025/26 external audit work.

The Audit Partner, Julio Camm, Ernst & Young LLP, set out the report and invited questions from the Committee.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Audit Partner advised that the firm had not identified instances of management override. Mark Hodgson of RSM advised that Auditors were alert to management overrides of control, and in the run-up to LGR, there was the potential for controls to be overridden so it was a live environment. Work around valuations on Pensions or Property, Plant and Equipment were areas where a significant amount of Audit time was required. Furthermore, he advised that for 2023/24, there were a significant number of items they were not able to obtain assurances on, however for 2024/25 there had been significant improvement, so the Council was moving in the right direction.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the report stating that the Council's progress fell behind the expected timescales, Mark Hodgson of RSM clarified that the Council fell behind in 2023/24 because they were unable to perform all audit procedures on that set of accounts having had a disclaimed audit opinion because of the back-stop that was imposed by the Government the year before. As a result, there were procedures that the firm were unable to do in 2023/24 when ordinarily they would expect full procedures to be done. 2024/25 was an improvement and there was only one area on Leases and the New Standard that it was not possible to complete. Furthermore, if the trajectory as set out in the report was followed, there was the potential for an unqualified audit opinion to be issued in 2026/27 or 2027/28, which would be before the Authority ceased to exist.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee commented and noted the External Auditor's Annual Planning Report, set out at Appendix 1.

71. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) informing of the approach and work undertaken on the Corporate Risk Register including the latest heat maps relating to the corporate risks.

The Risk Manager set out the report, drawing the attention of the Committee to a supplement that was published following the publication of the agenda, which provided a Key for the Heat Maps in Appendix 2 to the report.

In response to a question from the Committee around the residual risk

for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) being high and the implications of this, the Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer advised that the Council took EDI very seriously, however she and the Corporate Director – Finance and Resources would take this away and provide further detail on the narrative.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the 12 identified risks relating to LGR, the Corporate Director – Finance and Resources advised that each service had undertaken a review of delivery and their operational delivery as well as their internal resources. She would take more detail on this question and bring back to the Committee, particularly around how those risks could be mitigated and what could be done to ensure correct processes and procedures were in place.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee commented on the reports in the appendices and progress with risk management and noted the risks to the organisation and whether they are being managed in line with the Risk Management Strategy.

72. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) presenting a summary of the work undertaken by the Internal Audit Service since the Committee last met in March 2026.

The Head of Internal Audit, Dan Harris of RSM introduced the report, making reference to the good progress in terms of the previous year's plan of work, and invited questions from the Committee.

The Committee commented in relation to preparedness for LGR, and questioned if the next report could be brought forward to November, unless there were strong reasons not to. The Head of Internal Audit advised that he could take that point into the scoping of the review in early July with the Chief Executive, and at the next Committee he would update on whether the timeline allowed Officers to bring that report forward in light of the Committee's comments.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee commented on and noted the update on work undertaken by Internal Audit to date.

73. INTERNAL AUDIT ACTIONS UPDATE

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the progress made in implementing management actions arising from final internal audit reports.

The Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer introduced the report and invited questions from the Committee.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the Code of Procurement Audit, the Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer advised that the service had been under significant pressure and noted the complexity of this work. Her previous responses to the Committee had been a commitment for the work to be done well as opposed to fast, and a significant amount of work had been done on the revised Code of Procurement, which she considered to be a near final draft. This would be taken to the next meeting of the Constitution Review Working Group.

The Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer noted the comments of the Committee that the revised target date of 31st October 2026 should be a hard stop, and any further slippage would not be supported.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee commented on and noted the current position regarding actions arising from internal audit reports.

74. INTERNAL AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT - INCLUDING HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT OPINION 2025/26

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) setting out the Annual internal audit report for 2025/26 based on the professional judgement of the partner from RSM acting in the capacity of Head of Internal Audit.

The Head of Internal Audit, Dan Harris of RSM introduced the report, and placed on record his thanks to officers. RSM had a good risk focused plan and there had been a lot of engagement throughout 2025/26 in order to allow them to deliver their work.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Head of Internal Audit advised that he did not feel constrained, and as an example if he felt the risk environment for LGR was getting riskier, he would have conversations directly with the Corporate Director – Finance and Resources around needing more flexibility within this year's programme or if more audits were needed. Such conversations would be robust, and the outcome of the discussion would be reported back to the Committee.

The Committee commented that a more serious conversation would need to be had if it was felt that were capacity constraints further down the line, particularly for example the LGR preparedness report may result in follow-up and therefore add capacity requirements.

The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources advised that there was the option for flexibility, and this had been the case in the previous year where an area of serious concern was found internally, and officers had to extend the scope of the work and days carried out by RSM. LGR was difficult to scope at present but she reassured the Committee that Officers would come back to the Committee to say the scope of the Audit may need to change, and give options that

would include potentially extending the commission days and work of RSM. The Head of Internal Audit advised that he was content that the programme agreed did allow enough coverage for him to give the year-end opinion and welcomed the opportunity to liaise with officers and to collectively report back to the Committee as a result of those discussions.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Head of Internal Audit advised that by and large the right reports had been brought to the right Committee throughout year, without excessive delays. It may be that the KPI's could be enhanced next year to incorporate more specific detail as to how long and why delays occurred. In relation to more in-house reports being delivered, he advised that the reviews were scoped by RSM and the in-house team were exposed to that process to help them learn and gain knowledge of the approach, and weekly catch-ups took place. He and his management team would fully quality assure the work to ensure compliance with the standards.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that

the Committee noted, commented on and accepted the Annual internal audit report 2025/26.

75. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received and noted a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on progress of actions in response to any decisions taken at previous meetings.

The Committee noted the suggestion of the Chair to include an item on the agenda for the July meeting to discuss the future work of the Committee.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding mandatory safeguarding training being undertaken, the Corporate Director – Finance and Resources advised that fellow Corporate Directors were proactive in ensuring the training was being completed, and Officers were actively encouraged to meet mandatory training needs throughout the year, rather than leave it to the last moment.

Chair