

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL held in THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON on Wednesday, 27th July 2005.

PRESENT: Councillor C J Stephens – Chairman.

Councillors I C Bates, P J Downes,
T V Rogers, L M Simpson and R G Tuplin.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor I P Taylor.

5. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

(The Chairman announced that he proposed to admit the following urgent item in accordance with section 100B (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 given the need to fill the position of Vice-Chairman.)

RESOLVED

that Councillor I C Bates be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Panel for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

6. STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE, 2004: ISSUES PAPERS

(a) Performance Management

With the aid of a report by the Head of Policy (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was apprised of progress with the implementation of the Comprehensive Performance Management Framework. While the Panel was responsible for ensuring that a performance review system was in place it was pointed out that all Members, and particularly the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, had a role in reviewing the Council's performance.

RESOLVED

that the progress to date of the implementation of the Council's Performance Management Framework and the areas for future development over the next 12 months be noted

(b) Corporate Governance Training

Having received and noted a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on training that had been arranged for

Members of the Panel on matters that fell within their remit, it was

RESOLVED

that training be provided for Members of the Panel on corporate governance on 29th September 2005.

(c) Risk Management Review

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising progress against the risk management and internal control element of the Local Code of Corporate Governance and identifying required further action. Having noted that the proposed Risk Management 'Champion' would not be solely responsible for risk management and would, instead, provide an interface between Members and Officers, Members discussed a recent interruption to the power supply at Pathfinder House. In response to a question by Councillor Downes, Members were informed that service continuity was part of the Code, that its provisions had been complied with and that lessons had been learned.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the progress to date be noted;
- (ii) that the Cabinet be recommended to designate a Cabinet Member as the Risk Management 'Champion'; and
- (iii) that the proposals for future development of risk management be endorsed.

(d) Project Management of Capital Projects

A report by the Head of Environment and Transport (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the progress made against actions identified during an audit of the project management of capital projects and on the wider development of project management within the Council was received and noted.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the arrangements now in place which provide assurance that system risks relating to project management of capital projects are being properly managed be noted; and
- (ii) that the intention to publish, at a future

date, 'Managing Projects – A Corporate Guide' to extend project management from scheme inception to post implementation review be noted.

(e) Corporate Governance Improvement Planning – Financial Services

A report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) was considered on those matters identified during the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment that fell within his remit. Members' attention was drawn to the introduction by the Audit Commission of new criteria for the next Assessment and the difficulties they presented, particularly with regard to the use of resources. Having concurred with a suggestion that a further report should be submitted to a future meeting on the latter, it was

RESOLVED

- (i) that the action already taken and planned be noted; and
- (ii) that a further report on the Use of Resources matrix be submitted to a future meeting.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE: ANNUAL REPORT

The Panel received and noted a report by the Internal Audit Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained the Internal Audit Manager's opinion on the Council's systems of internal control and which summarised the progress made against the 2004/05 Annual Audit Plan.

Members noted the circumstances that had led the Internal Audit Manager to conclude that the Council's internal control environment provided limited assurance over the effective exercise of its functions. Having discussed the Code of Procurement and the work planned to improve compliance with its terms, it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

8. REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2004/05

The Panel considered the draft Report and Accounts for the year 2004/05 (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book). On the understanding that the Annual Statement of Assurance would be submitted to the Panel in September, it was

RESOLVED

- (i) that the draft Report and Accounts be approved so that the audit can commence; and
- (ii) that the Annual Statement of Assurance on Corporate Governance be presented to the Panel in September.

9. MONEY LAUNDERING AVOIDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

With the aid of a report by the Audit Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel considered the terms of a draft Money Laundering Avoidance Policy. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Anti-Money Laundering Policy attached at Appendix A to the report now submitted be adopted.

10. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

By means of a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel were acquainted with the circumstances that would lead to the annual adjustment for Members' Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowance being higher than expected. In the circumstances Members accepted a suggestion that for 2005/06 only the Allowances should be increased by the same rate as that applied to the salaries of the Council's employees. Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to vary the existing Members' Allowances Scheme for the current year only and to increase the level of the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances for Members with effect from the Annual Meeting on the 18th May 2005 by the same percentage increase as applied to the salaries of Council employees for 2005/06.

11. MEMBERS' LICENSING CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

Having considered a report by the Head of Administration to which was appended a draft Members' Licensing Code of Good Practice (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), it was

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Licensing Code of Good Practice be approved; and
- (ii) that the Council be recommended to include the Licensing Code of Good Practice in the Constitution.

12. SPECIAL MEETING

RESOLVED

that a special meeting of the Panel to consider, inter alia, the Annual Statement of Assurance be held at 4pm on 29th September 2005.

13. COMPLAINTS

The Panel received and noted a report by the Director of Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing an analysis of the Council's internal complaints and a summary of complaints concerning the District Council determined by the Local Government Ombudsman in 2004/05. Member's attention was drawn to the fact that the Ombudsman had found no cases of maladministration by the Council. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the report be received and noted.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to an applicant for a service provided by the Council and the financial affairs of a particular person other than the authority.

15. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN - LOCAL SETTLEMENT OF COMPLAINT

The Panel received and noted a report by the Director of Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Annex to the Minute Book) on a complaint against the Council by a Member of the public with regard to a Council Tax bill and the terms of a compensatory payment by way of a local settlement of the complaint.

Chairman