

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL held in the Aquarius Room, St Ivo Leisure Centre, Westwood Road, St Ives, Cambridgeshire, PE27 6WU on Tuesday, 23 June 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor C J Stephens – Chairman.
Councillors M G Baker, P L E Bucknell, S J Criswell, P J Downes and T V Rogers.

APOLOGY: An Apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor A Hansard.

5. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 13th May 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

7. ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER

(Mr N Smith, the Council's Relationship Manager for the Audit Commission was in attendance for consideration of this item).

The Panel gave consideration to the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). In respect of the performance of the Council in 2007/08, Mr Smith informed Members that the Council's rate of improvement in priority areas compared favourably against other District Councils and drew the Panel's attention to the fact that the Council had consistently exceeded the Audit Commission's criteria for "performing well". Having noted the overall assessment and key issues arising from the account, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter be received and noted.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

To resolve:-

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to individuals.

9. HOUSING BENEFIT COMPLAINT: AWARD OF COMPENSATION

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Customer Services (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book) on a complaint made against the Council by a member of the public and the terms of compensatory payment which had been approved in accordance with the scheme of delegations.

RESOLVED

that the report be received and noted.

10. RE-ADMITTANCE OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be re-admitted to the meeting.

11. AUDIT STRATEGY DOCUMENT

(Mrs L Sandford of Grant Thornton UK LLP, the Council's external auditor, was in attendance for consideration of this item).

Consideration was given to the Audit Strategy Document for the year ending 31st March 2009 (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which outlined the approach to be undertaken by the external auditors for the audit of the Council, which included the former Leisure Centre Management Committees.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the Audit Strategy Document be noted.

12. FINAL ACCOUNTS 2008/09

With the aid of a presentation by the Head of Financial Services, the Panel considered the draft Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2009 (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). Having had their attention drawn to a number of amendments, Members were acquainted with issues arising, which included the Council's investments, the pension fund, the treatment of capital and the collection fund.

In response to concerns which had been raised on the reported deficit in the pension fund, the Head of Financial Services informed Members that while the funds assets were currently valued at the market value for investments, a full valuation every 3 years took account of a wide variety of factors including liability and potential changes in investment markets and that this would be used to evaluate changes in the employer's contribution rate.

Arising from concerns relating to the risks associated with the Council's approach to long term investments, the Panel has received assurances that appropriate procedures were put in place through the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

In response to a question on the appearance of Government Departments as one of the Council's debtors, Members were informed that this related to grant funding from Central Government which was currently being awaited.

Having commended the Head of Financial Services and relevant Officers on the compilation of the accounts, the Panel

RESOLVED

- (a) that the draft Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2009 be approved; and
- (b) that the Leisure Centre Management Committee Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2009 be approved.

13. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE: INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

The Panel received a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was appended a proposed Internal Audit and Assurance Plan for the 12 months period commencing 1st August 2009.

RESOLVED

that the Audit and Assurance Plan be approved.

14. ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK

By means of a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was acquainted with the outcome of a review of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Framework. Having been apprised with details of the views of managers and staff on the current approach to be taken towards countering fraud and corruption, the Panel

RESOLVED

- (a) that the responses to the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Framework be noted; and
- (b) that the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Framework Action Plan be endorsed.

15. 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 which had been determined by the Local Government Ombudsman in 2008/09.

RESOLVED

that the report be received and noted.

Chairman