

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 Thursday, 16 April 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor C J Stephens – Chairman.
Councillors P J Downes, P M D Godfrey, J A Gray, T V Rogers and L M Simpson.

APOLOGY: An Apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillors M G Baker.

43. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 25th March 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

45. REVIEW OF DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE

(Councillor K J Churchill, Special Advisor to the Cabinet, was in attendance for this item).

The Panel received a report by the Structure Review Working Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the findings of an extensive review of the Council's democratic structure, together with the initial thoughts of the Cabinet and the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels on the proposed recommendations.

In introducing the report, the Special Advisor to the Cabinet acquainted Members with the background to the review, which comprised the political composition of the Working Group, the changing role of local authority Councillors, the review methodology and the legislative position of the authority. Additionally, it was reported that two presentations on the outcome of the review had been delivered to all Members in March.

Whilst the Panel expressed support for many of the Working Group's recommendations, some concerns have been raised in relation to the financial implications of the recommendations, particularly in terms of the Special Responsibility Allowances proposed for the additional Cabinet Member and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the additional Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Specifically, Members did not support the proposals relating to increasing the size of the Cabinet, the composition of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels with the co-opted Members having full voting rights and the adoption of a

Speaker at Council meetings. Having regard to the latter, the Panel commented that the Working Group should be invited to investigate further the Rules of Debate at Council meetings. Members noted also that in light of changes to the relevant codes and other regulatory requirements, further consideration needed to be given to the Panel's terms of reference.

Having thanked the Working Group for their efforts in providing a thorough and comprehensive report, it was noted that final considerations on the report would be given by the Cabinet at a Special Meeting on 17th April 2009 in advance of a decision being made by the Council on 22nd April 2009.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to, with the exception of the points listed below, endorse the recommendations of the Structure Review Working Group as summarised in the report now submitted:

- recommendation (b) – that this recommendation is not supported;
- recommendation (h) – that this recommendation is not supported;
- recommendation (o) – subject to the deletion of the word “annual”;
- recommendation (p) – that this recommendation is not supported but that the Working Group be invited to investigate further the Rules of Debate at Council meetings;
- recommendation (w) – subject to the meeting time remaining at 4pm, with the Committee being flexible to change the time of the meeting as necessary;
- recommendation (dd) – subject to negotiation with partners;
- recommendation (ee) – subject to negotiation with partners;
- recommendation (hh) – subject to it excluding significant partnerships where other arrangements apply; and
- recommendation (rr) – that the Working Group be invited to consider alternative options for funding the proposed changes.

46. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007 - IMPLICATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Chairman announced that he proposed to admit the following urgent Item in accordance with Section 100B (4) (d) of the Local Government Act 1972 given the need for the Panel to consider the report as it requires changes to be made to the Constitution to take effect from 1st April 2009.

With the aid of a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel has been acquainted with legislative changes affecting Overview and Scrutiny, which have arisen from the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

In noting that the new provisions have taken effect from 1st April 2009 and would require changes to be made to the Council Procedure Rules and Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules contained within the Constitution, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to

- (a) approve the changes to the Council Procedure Rules and Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules contained in Annex A of the report now submitted; and
- (b) endorse the content of a guide for a Councillor Call for Action contained in Annex B of the report now submitted.

Chairman