

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL held in the Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 23 March 2011.

PRESENT: Councillor M G Baker – Vice-Chairman.

Councillors P L E Bucknell, S J Criswell,
T V Rogers and C M Saunderson.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors K J Churchill and T D Sanderson.

30. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 8th December 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

31. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

32. EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2010/11

(Mr C McLaughlin of Pricewaterhouse Coopers LLP, the Council's external auditors, was in attendance for consideration of this item).

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached the external audit plan for 2010/11. Mr C McLaughlin delivered an outline of the planned work to be undertaken at the Council over the course of the year and drew attention to the level of audit fees anticipated for undertaking grant claim certifications. The Panel discussed the threshold for uncorrected misstatements identified within the accounts and the auditing of revenue items contained within the Council's Medium Term Plan. With regard to the former, it was agreed that the total number of errors identified between £50,000 and £80,000 would be included within future reports. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the content of the Council's External Audit Plan 2010/11 be received and noted.

33. GRANT CERTIFICATION REPORT 2009/10

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing the external auditor's certification of specific grants received by the Council in 2009/10. Whilst there were no significant issues arising from the report, the Panel questioned the value for money gained

from undertaking this work given that only minor errors had been identified.

RESOLVED

that the Grants Certification Report for 2009/10 be received and noted.

34. 2010/11 ACCOUNTS - ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The Panel gave consideration to a report prepared by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking approval of draft accounting policies which had been prepared for the 2010/11 accounts. The policies had been developed in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and had resulted in changes to the way in which the accounts would be presented.

Having been informed that there would no longer be a requirement for the Panel to comment upon the draft accounts, the Panel concurred that for best practice purposes the draft statement of accounts should continue to be submitted to the Panel at its June meeting.

In noting that training would be provided to Members of the Panel on the new format of the accounts, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the draft accounting policies for 2010/11 be approved.

35. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CODE OF PROCUREMENT

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) proposing amendments to the Code of Procurement. In light of recent developments concerning the Coalition Government's localism agenda, it was suggested by a Member that a further review of the Code to take into account the anticipated emergence of social enterprise businesses might be necessary. Having expressed their support for the proposed amendments, it was

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to endorse the revised Code of Procurement as appended to the report now submitted.

36. PROGRESS REPORT ON ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which provided the half yearly review of the Annual Governance Statement action plan and the Council's improvement plan. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that progress made to date with regards to the implementation of the action plan arising from the Annual Governance Statement and the Council's improvement plan be noted.

37. RISK REGISTER

With the aid of a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was acquainted with changes made to the Risk Register between the period 1st September 2010 to 28th February 2011 inclusive.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report now submitted be noted.

38. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE: INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT

During discussion on this item, the Vice-Chairman of the Panel, Councillor M G Baker, left the meeting (7.35pm). In the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor T V Rogers be elected Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

The Panel received and noted a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the progress made to date in respect of the delivery of the 2010/11 Annual Audit Plan and the performance standards achieved. Updates were received on the audit system review undertaken for supermarket car park recovery costs and a data encryption exercise currently being undertaken by the Council.

RESOLVED

that the content of the report now submitted be noted.

39. EMPLOYEES' CODE OF CONDUCT

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel were acquainted with details of proposed changes to the Employees' Code of Conduct. The changes were proposed following a recent review of the Code and the Council's Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Council be recommended to endorse the necessary changes to the Employees' Code of Conduct; and
- (b) that the Head of Law, Property and Governance be authorised to make minor changes to the Employees'

Code of Conduct following the publication of guidelines on the Bribery Act in consultation with the Chairmen of the Employment and Corporate Governance Panels.

Chairman