



The **ANNUAL** meeting of **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL** will be held in the **CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER / STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **WEDNESDAY, 22 MAY 2024** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

To elect a Chair of the Council for the ensuing Municipal Year.

2. MINUTES (Pages 7 - 18)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 27th March 2024.

Time Allocation: 2 Minutes.

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, other registerable and non - registerable interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.

Time Allocation: 2 Minutes.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

To appoint a Vice-Chair of the Council for the ensuing Municipal Year.

5. APPOINTMENT OF CABINET

The Executive Leader to announce the names of a maximum of eight other Councillors who shall be Members of the Cabinet, including the name of the Deputy Executive Leader and the Assistant Deputy Executive Leader.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE REVIEW, CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
(Pages 19 - 26)

Councillor N Wells, Chair of the Corporate Governance Committee to present a report proposing changes to the terms of reference and membership of the Council’s Corporate Governance Committee.

(The report was considered at a Special meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee held on 18th April 2024).

Time Allocation: 10 Minutes.

7. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE (Pages 27 - 28)

Councillor N Wells, Chair of the Corporate Governance Committee to present a report proposing the appointment of two Independent members to the Committee for a period up to 30th April 2027.

Time Allocation: 5 Minutes.

8. REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEES, ETC

To consider a report by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager on the representation of political groups on Committees and Panels in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the District Council’s Constitution – **TO FOLLOW.**

9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS

To appoint to:

- 1. Overview and Scrutiny Panel
(Performance and Growth) 12 Members
- 2. Overview and Scrutiny Panel
(Environment, Communities and Partnerships) 12 Members

10. COMMITTEES

To appoint to:

Development Management Committee 16 Members
(to include 1 Member of the Cabinet)

Corporate Governance Committee	7 Members
Licensing and Protection Committee (to include 1 Member of the Cabinet)	12 Members
Licensing Committee (to include 1 Member of the Cabinet)	12 Members
Employment Committee (to include 1 Member of the Cabinet)	8 Members
Senior Officers Committee (4 Members of the Council and the relevant Executive Councillor in relation to the post to be filled)	4 Members
Appeals Sub-Group <i>(a pool of Members from which the Elections and Democratic Services Manager is authorised to convene a meeting of the Appeals Sub-Committee comprising up to 5 Members [excluding Members of the Employment Committee and the Senior Officers Committee] to determine appeals under the Council's disciplinary and appeals procedure).</i>	15 Members

11. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY MEMBERSHIP AND OTHER APPOINTMENTS

To consider a report requesting the Council to make appointments to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority for the 2024/25 Municipal Year – **TO FOLLOW**.

12. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION GOVERNANCE PEER CHALLENGE (Pages 29 - 66)

The Executive Councillor for Customer Services, Councillor S Ferguson to present the Local Government Association Governance Peer Challenge report.

(The report was considered at the meeting of the Cabinet on the 16th April 2024 and a Special Meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee on 18th April 2024).

Time Allocation: 15 Minutes.

13. CONSTITUTION REVIEW WORKING GROUP

To appoint seven Members to a Constitution Review Working Group.

The Review Working Group will report to the Corporate Governance Committee.

14. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

Arising from the meeting of the Senior Officers Committee held on 20th May 2024 to consider a report by the Chief Executive regarding the appointment of a new Chief Financial Officer and Section 151 Officer for the Council – **TO FOLLOW**.

Time Allocation: 5 Minutes.

FOR INFORMATION - COUNCILLORS ATTENDANCE AND EXPENSES INFORMATION 2023/24 (Pages 67 - 72)

14th day of May 2024

Michelle Sacks

Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution](#)

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Please contact Mrs Lisa Jablonska, Elections and Democratic Services Manager, Tel No. 01480 388004 / e-mail Lisa.Jablonska@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Council.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the [District Council's website](#).

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in the CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER / STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 27 March 2024

PRESENT: Councillor M J Burke – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, B S Banks, M L Beuttell, A Blackwell, R J Brereton, E R Butler, S Bywater, S Cawley, S J Conboy, S J Corney, A E Costello, L Davenport-Ray, S W Ferguson, C M Gleadow, J A Gray, K P Gulson, J E Harvey, M A Hassall, P J Hodgson-Jones, S A Howell, N J Hunt, A R Jennings, P A Jordan, M Kadewere, P Kadewere, D N Keane, J E Kerr, C Lowe, R Martin, S R McAdam, B A Mickelburgh, D L Mickelburgh, J Neish, Dr M Pickering, B M Pitt, T D Sanderson, D J Shaw, R A Slade, S L Taylor, I P Taylor, D Terry, C H Tevlin and S Wakeford.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Clarke, S J Criswell, D B Dew, I D Gardener, S Mokbul, N Wells and G J Welton.

Prior to the start of the of the proceedings, the Chair reported that Members were joined in the public gallery by family and friends of Huntingdonshire resident and cycling campaigner, Mike Gough, who tragically lost his life in a road collision earlier this month. The Council were informed that Mike was a former employee of the District Council and was one of the founder members of Hunts Walking and Cycling Group. He was also an enthusiastic advocate for more cycling infrastructure and safer streets. The Council conveyed their best wishes to his family, friends and former colleagues at this sad time.

64 THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

A 'Thought for the Day' was presented by Councillor P J Hodgson-Jones.

65 MINUTES

Subject to the replacement of the initial N with the initial A for Councillor Jennings in the second paragraph of Minute Number 23/59, the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 21st February 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

66 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

67 CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR'S ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reported on the resignation of ex Councillor Richard West as District Councillor for Great Paxton. Richard had served as a District Councillor for 18

consecutive years. Owing to his notable and distinguished service, the Council were informed that Group Leaders had agreed to convey to Richard the title of Honorary Alderman and this would be undertaken at a future meeting. A by-election for the Great Paxton seat would be held on Thursday 2nd May 2024.

Members were also advised that this would be the last meeting attended by Paul Fox, Interim Director for People who would be leaving the authority at the end of March. Members placed on record their gratitude to Paul for his support during the transitional period in which he had been employed.

The Council then noted those engagements attended by the Chair and Vice-Chair since the last meeting (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book).

68 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chair reported that there had been no public questions received by the deadline for consideration by the Council.

69 CORPORATE PLAN REFRESH 2024

With the assistance of a report by the Business Intelligence and Performance Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Executive Leader Councillor S J Conboy presented an updated Corporate Plan for 2023-24 to the Council for approval.

By way of introduction, the Executive Leader reminded the Council that the Corporate Plan set out the Council's priorities, desired outcomes and how it proposes to achieve these during the period.

In presenting the refreshed document, Councillor Conboy drew attention to the proposed amendments to the refreshed Plan. These included changes to the wording of the priority 'Doing our Core Work Well' to make it easier to understand and reference, together with the proposal to widen the lowering of carbon emissions to encourage the reduction across the District. Attention was also drawn to the proposed actions for 2024/25 and the amendments which were proposed to the operational performance indicators for 2024/25. The Council were informed that several additional indicators were expected to be required by the Office for Local Government to support local government to improve performance. It was hoped that these could be utilised to identify areas of strength and development as well as benchmarking so that the Authority could understand how to drive better value public sector value for money and improve performance on behalf of Huntingdonshire residents.

In responding to the remarks by the Executive Leader, the Leader of the Opposition Councillor J A Gray reiterated the importance in ensuring that targets were set appropriately. He also commented on the absence of any apparent self-reflection within the previous year, naming Civil Parking Enforcement and the pay negotiations as examples.

In terms of the number of actions within the refreshed Plan, Councillor Gray acknowledged that this was ambitious but urged the Joint Administration not to lose sight of the day-to-day functions that a growing number of residents were increasingly dissatisfied with. Reference was made specifically to grass cutting,

bin collections and the garden waste subscription scheme. Comments were made regarding the increasing problems with rubbish and litter and blocked drains in the rural areas which in his opinion were not being addressed as adequately as in the urban areas.

In responding to the comments which had been made, Councillor S Ferguson acknowledged the importance of setting realistic, appropriate, and stretch targets for the Council and undertook to work with the entire Council to ensure that this was achieved. He also acknowledged that there had been challenges over the course of the previous two years. With regards to the issue of blocked drains, Councillor Ferguson also took the opportunity to advise the Council that in 2023 in St Neots alone, Cambridgeshire County Council had cleared 6,099 drains compared to the 5 years prior to when he was elected in which there had been no clearing of drains in St Neots and Godmanchester under the previous administration. Councillor S L Taylor suggested that the introduction of the green waste subscription charge would enable additional budgetary provision to be spent on other statutory duties.

Councillor S Wakeford then took the opportunity to refute the suggestion that the Administration were primarily concerned with the urban areas of the District. He also commented on the continued focus which the refreshed Plan gave to the enabling and influencing of work outside of the District Council's control which would address some of the greater challenges facing the District's residents, for example rural transportation.

Councillor L Davenport-Ray took the opportunity to respond to comments which had been made regarding the relationship between the Joint Administration and the employees of the Council. In so doing, she referred to the recent agreement of the pay award which demonstrated the strides which had been made to improve relationships with the Council's employees and the aim within the Corporate Plan to be an employer with improved staff recruitment and retention.

With regards to target setting and the setting of challenging but realistic targets, Councillor P J Hodgson-Jones urged the Overview and Scrutiny Panels to assist with the scrutiny, delivery, and achievement of these targets.

During the debate, Councillor N J Hunt took the opportunity to highlight some of the successes of the Joint Administration during the previous year which were relevant to the younger residents of the District. These included the provision of 544 new affordable homes, an increasing number in users of new junior memberships at One Leisure, the approval of a new tenancy and housing strategy and the efforts being made to recruit graduates and apprentices to the Authority.

Whereupon and having been proposed by Councillor S J Conboy and seconded by Councillor S Wakeford, it was

RESOLVED

that the refreshed Corporate Plan (as attached at Appendix 1 be approved).

70 AMENDED FEES AND CHARGES SCHEDULE

With the assistance of a report by the Director of Finance and Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources, Councillor B A Mickelburgh presented a series of corrections to Annex A the Fees and Charges Schedule which had been approved at the previous meeting of the Council as part of the 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2028/29.

By way of introduction, the Executive Councillor for Resources and Finance explained that a review of the annex following the previous meeting had identified that several fees and charges had been omitted. These were highlighted within the agenda pack and included the statutory services set by Central Government for example zoo and bingo hall licensing fees. Members were assured that these had not affected the Core Budget or the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and had been reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) at their last meeting.

In commenting on the proposed schedule the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor J A Gray commented on the level of the increases in some areas which were significantly above levels of inflation. Specific reference being made to some One Leisure charges and those for houses for multiple occupation. Comment was also made with regards to the inclusion of the charge for the garden waste subscription charge and it was for this reason, Councillor Gray indicated that he would not be supporting the recommendation.

Whereupon, it was moved by Councillor B A Mickelburgh, duly seconded by Councillor S Wakeford and

RESOLVED

that the highlighted amendments to the Fees and Charges Schedule, Annex A of the 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2028/29 as set put in the report now submitted be approved.

71 QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

With reference to discussions at recent meetings of Parish Councils, Councillor S Cawley outlined the concerns which were being expressed regarding the potential for an increase in fly tipping following the implementation of the new green bin subscription service. An assurance was sought that the District Council would do all it could to enforce fly tipping and to have robust plans in place to tackle the issue. In response to which, the Executive Councillor for Customer Services, Councillor S Ferguson reiterated that the Enforcement Team continued to take the issue of fly tipping seriously and that a new schedule of fines for enforcement had recently been approved. He also reiterated the importance of education, so that residents did not find themselves being prosecuted when they passed their waste to commercial operators who later fly tipped. When prosecutions did take place, he was keen to ensure that they were publicised. The Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene, Councillor S L Taylor also took the opportunity to provide an update on the take-up rate for the garden waste subscription service and Members were informed that 42% of households had now taken up the scheme, against a target of 30%.

Referring to the recent correspondence which had been sent to Parish Councils for distribution to residents regarding the availability of green bin freighters, Councillor K Gulson commented on the complaints which were being fielded by Parish Councils from residents who were unaware of the community initiatives before they paid for a bin, together with the numerous questions and concerns regarding the operation of the initiatives. In response to which, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene explained that she was concerned that residents were not aware of these initiatives given that they had been discussed at great length at Overview and Scrutiny, in workshops with members, towns and parish councils and community groups. Members were reminded that they had been put in place to address the concerns of those who had been unable to afford a green bin. Details regarding the operation of the schemes were available on the District Council website.

Comment was also made with regards to the inaccuracies of several freighter locations on the What3Words App. In response to which the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene, Councillor S L Taylor explained that officers were currently assessing the situation.

In response to a request from Councillor N J Hunt for an update regarding progress with the Shopfront Improvement Scheme in Huntingdon, Ramsey, St Ives and St Neots, the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing Councillor S Wakeford reported on the number of applications received and awards made in each area. Members noted that he was pleased with the level of interest received thus far and the take up of the programme which was now operational in all four market towns.

In response to a request from Councillor D J Shaw for an update on the current backlog of planning applications and enforcement cases, the Executive Councillor for Planning Councillor T D Sanderson reported that the number of household applications determined on time remained above the target of 85% at the end of February. Although major applications had fallen slightly, they were getting back on track. There had also been a reduction in the backlog of cases. He was pleased to report that performance within the service had now been met or exceeded targets for nine consecutive months.

With reference to recent contact from a resident in his ward who was a member of the St Neots Swans Swimming Club, Councillor A Jennings drew attention to the discrepancies between the provision which had been made for swimming club training between different Leisure Centres within the District and asked the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene whether any action could be taken to assist the St Neots Club. In response to which, Councillor S L Taylor explained that she had already spoken to the Head of Leisure regarding the matter, and it would need to be considered in further detail. Given that the facility was also used by the public, the current shortage of swimming facilities within the District, and the need to accommodate general swimming there was a balance to be struck. She undertook to give the matter further consideration.

In response to a question from Councillor J Harvey regarding the methods by which residents might transport their green waste to the Saturday freighters, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene suggested that this could be done using a reusable solid box. Although black bin liners could be

used, if necessary, these should always be taken away and disposed of afterwards.

In light of the comments made regarding public awareness of the garden waste community initiatives and his experience with his own residents Councillor R Martin questioned whether there was need to scrutinise the Council's Communications Strategy to explore whether there were alternative ways of communicating with local residents. Having noted in detail the communications which had taken place with town, parishes and community groups from September 2023 to-date, the Executive Councillor for Customer Services took the opportunity to explain that communications with regards to this decision had far exceeded any the Council had previously undertaken. He also reiterated the responsibility for all Councillors to report on the decisions of the District Council to the town and parish councils in their area.

In response to a further question from Councillor R Martin as to how the District Council was planning to support those Parish Council's that didn't own land or had nowhere to store extra community bins, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene Councillor S L Taylor undertook to respond to this question in writing. She went on to explain that it would be the responsibility of Town and Parish Councils to ensure that there was no contamination of waste within the Community Bins and that they were ready for collection at the appropriate times. She also undertook to provide further details to Councillor M L Beutell as to when Parish Councils were informed of their responsibilities regarding contamination.

With reference to the recent increases in planning fees, Councillor J Neish sought assurances that residents and developers would see improved turnaround times in planning applications and confirmation that the increased income in planning would be ring fenced for the planning service. In response to which, the Executive Councillor for Planning Councillor T D Sanderson agreed to provide further details in writing. However, he reminded Members that applications continued to be determined in accordance with the Council's key performance indications and that the Council were seeing fewer applications being disputed by Parish Councils. In terms of income, he was pleased to report that a further grant had been received from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and he would endeavour to ensure that was reinvested into the department as much as possible.

With reference to an elderly and housebound resident within his ward who received assisted bin green bin collections, Councillor J Neish queried whether there were any concessions within the new subscription scheme. In response to which, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene explained that although there were no specific concessionary elements, the community initiatives had been designed to assist those who were unable to afford the new charge. In terms of communications the Executive Councillor undertook to investigate further the potential to ensure that bin hangers were posted directly through the doors of those who received assisted collections.

With reference to the recent agreement of a pay settlement for District Council employees for 2024/25, Councillor D Mickleburgh queried the affordability of the agreement and asked how it would influence staff recruitment and the ongoing Workforce Strategy. The Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment,

Councillor L Davenport-Ray confirmed that the award was affordable and within the Budget approved by the Council the previous month. It was her understanding that the 2024/25 award had been influential to staff who may have been considering departing the Council and it was the belief of both Council and staff representatives that it would improve the attractiveness of the authority to new employees over the coming year. She was pleased to report that Huntingdonshire was the first authority within Cambridgeshire to reach an agreement upon pay for 2024/25 and expressed her appreciation to all those who had been involved in the process.

With reference to recent discussions by the Corporate Governance Committee on the Risk Register, Councillor E R Butler sought comments from the Executive Councillor for Planning on the risk identified for Development Management regarding the failure to achieve commitments. In response to which, the Executive Councillor for Planning explained that this emphasised the importance of updating the Local Plan for the District, and that the planning service would continue to work towards achieving its targets. He also drew attention to the continuing difficulties in employing and retaining staff within the planning service and the role that the new Workforce Strategy would play in helping to improve this position. The Executive Councillor with responsibility for employment matters also reiterated that the approach towards the attraction and retention of planning staff had been altered in recent months and this was being to show some positive results.

With reference to her recent attendance at a Phoenix Futures event, Councillor C H Tevlin requested an update on the Huntingdonshire Place Strategy. The Executive Leader advised the Council that an update on the Festival of Place would be presented to Overview and Scrutiny shortly and it was hoped that the Council may then be able to move forward with the offer of the grant scheme.

In response to a question from Councillor T D Alban as to whether any consideration had been given to offering charitable relief to churches and other charitable organisations for the garden waste subscription service, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene explained that the issue had been considered but would be very difficult to administer. The Executive Councillor for Customer Services Councillor S W Ferguson reiterated that the cost of doing so would significantly reduce the effectiveness of the scheme and referred his colleagues to the previous discussions on the matter prior to the implementation of the scheme.

In response to a request for clarification on the closing date for requests for refunds for those who had already paid for the subscription service, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene Councillor S L Taylor explained that requests must be received before the 1st April 2024. She also undertook to establish if requests received on Bank Holiday Good Friday - 31st March 2024, would also be honoured.

In response to a request from Councillor C A Lowe for an update regarding the replanting of trees on the A14, the Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment undertook to respond outside the meeting in writing to ensure that she was providing the most recent information.

In response to a subsequent question from Councillor C A Lowe as to whether it was possible to undertake a tour of the Mechanical Biological Treatment Plant Facility at Waterbeach, Members were advised that a tour had been offered upon their election to the Council. Whilst it may be possible in the future, it was not currently feasible as the County Council were currently investigating upgrading the facility to comply with recent European legislation which had resulted in the closure of two of the treatment lines.

Councillor P J Hodgson-Jones reported on his recent attendance at a meeting of the A141 Working Group and outlined his concerns that the studies which had been undertaken to alleviate the traffic and congestion on the road would not be progressed. In responding to the concerns raised, the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing Councillor S Wakeford and the Huntingdonshire representative on the Transport and Infrastructure Committee of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority outlined his disappointment that the Councillor had interpreted the meeting in this way. Council were informed that the CPCA had commissioned Cambridgeshire County Council to take this forward and that proposals were being reviewed in light of the update of government policies concerning the impact on the environment. Further engagement would take place in due course. Councillor P Hodgson-Jones went on to reiterate that whilst sustainable transportation was important, given the scale of development in the area, road improvements were also required. The Executive Councillor clarified that these were still being considered.

Councillor J A Gray asked the Executive Leader for her view on whether car parking fees should be used to deter individuals from using their cars to drive into town centres or reduced to incentivise people to use the town centres and facilities within the market towns. In response to which, the Executive Leader explained that this was not an easy answer and would form part of an ongoing dialogue. One of the real challenges was not just about the philosophy of what the Council should do but was also about the practicalities of looking at the Council's fees and charges and up until now parking charges have been crucial to balancing that. She was hopeful that the Council would be able to have that philosophical discussion as it moves forward with a sustainable forward-looking Budget, as it was an important matter for discussion for the District's high streets and town centres.

Finally, in response to a question from Councillor S Wakeford as to whether it might be helpful for Executive Councillors to be given advance notice of those questions which required multi part or detailed answers, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene Councillor S L Taylor agreed that Members would get a more detailed response if she was given prior warning. Within this in mind, she encouraged any members who had issues to make contact with her in advance of the meeting. In response to which, Councillor T D Alban reiterated that the Constitution did not require advance notice to be provided and there was a danger of Council meetings appearing pre-rehearsed. He argued that perhaps there was a balance to be struck.

In conjunction with the decision summaries of the recent meetings of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), the Council received an update on the activities of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board (CPCA). Copies of the decision summaries are appended in the Minute Book.

With the assistance of a PowerPoint presentation, Councillor M A Hassall provided an update on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee. As part of the presentation, Council Hassall drew attention to the challenges to the Improvement Plan arising from the imposition of a Best Value Notice for a further 6 months. These could be split into 3 categories – Strategic Alignment, Delivery Confidence and Cross-Partnership challenges and Councillor Hassall provided further information on each point in turn.

Council was then advised of the measures that had been put in place to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These were in the areas of Forward Planning, Agenda Management, Formal Feedback to the Board and Staff Support. Councillor Hassall reiterated the importance of effective Overview and Scrutiny in improving the outcomes for residents and ensuring that issues were accurately represented.

In responding to the presentation, Councillor J A Gray commented on the impression that he had received that the Board was not aligned and questioned whether this was a reflection of ineffective leadership. In response to which, Councillor Hassall explained that his comments concerning the need to look at the strength of the governance arrangements were independent of the mayor and concerned the governance of the Authority as a whole. He made reference to the setting of the Mayoral precept which permitted a situation whereby the mayor could set an increase of 200% provided that a two thirds majority of the Board did not vote against it and the need to establish better links between the CPCA and Constituent Councils. Councillor Gray also commented on the irony of an Authority which was under a Best Value Notice increasing its precept by 200%.

Members were provided with an update on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Audit and Governance Committee by Councillor S Corney. In doing so, the Council were advised that discussions had centred around the Auditors Annual Report and the Improvement Framework. Members noted that the imposition of the Best Value Notice had resulted in a substantial increase in costs over the course of the past year. However, on a more positive note Councillor Corney went on to report that the Chair of the Improvement Board had met with Board Members and Constituent Council Chief Executives to develop a clear vision and ambition to promote investment and opportunities for the region and it had been reported that relationships had improved with the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities. Arising from Councillor Corney's presentation and from the previous comments which had been made concerning governance, a suggestion was made by Councillor P Hodgson Jones regarding the potential establishment of a working group involving members of the Audit and Governance Committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Board to look further at the Authority's Governance structure and operation.

The Executive Leader, Councillor S J Conboy then addressed the Council on the activities of the Combined Authority Board. As part of her presentation, Councillor Conboy explained that the Governance review was now in place, however there was an impatience to be getting on and making things work better. The issues which Councillor Hassall had raised had been shared with the Combined Authorities Monitoring Officer, together with the lead member Councillor E Murphy.

Councillor Conboy reiterated that the Combined Authority had made significant progress within the past twenty months, it now had a stable and secure officer structure and there had also significant changes to the way the Board works politically which had resulted in improved operation and working relationships. Inevitably there would always be disagreements and different interests to be met but that was a fundamental part of democracy, and it would be unreasonable to expect Members of the Board to agree on all matters all of the time.

Councillor Conboy went on to explain that the Board was starting to move forward and agree upon the issues that the Authority could stand behind collectively and the work for the UKREiiF Event was an important driver for that. In terms of the Department of Levelling Up's requirement for strategic alignment, Councillor Conboy explained that she did not believe it was a reasonable expectation to secure agreement on every occasion and she had fed that back to the DHCLU. Whilst the Authority still had more to do in terms of improvements, and there would always be new matters to address, there was now more bringing the Board together than ever before and there was a clear direction of travel. She would continue to represent Huntingdonshire to obtain the greatest benefit from the arrangement for the residents of the District.

Arising from the presentation, Councillor L Davenport-Ray commented on the positive and collaborative way in which Constituent Council representatives sitting upon the Combined Authority Committees worked. However, she expressed concerns at the negative and unconstructive way in which some of the members of the Board appeared. Having been asked to give her thoughts on how the Best Value Notice may be moved without the camaraderie and support of all Board Members, the Executive Leader explained that the Board needed to focus upon the issues on which it could unite whilst accepting that they had differences. However, this did require a will on behalf of each individual, she could only take responsibility and control for her own decisions and behaviour.

Councillor S Cawley reported on the discontent of his residents in West Huntingdonshire at the increase in the Mayoral precept, given that they had no bus services within the area. He urged the Executive Leader to continue to press for additional services within the area. In response to which the Executive Leader explained that Huntingdonshire was the beneficiary of future change and undertook to respond directly to Councillor Cawley outside of the meeting. She also took the opportunity to remind all Councillors with an interest in bus related issues to engage with the bus working group and the lead councillors who sat upon the Transport and Infrastructure Community Committee.

With reference to the recent decision summary for the Transport and Infrastructure Committee, Councillor A Jennings sought further information on the proposed boundary change to the existing area for the E-scooter trial. In

response to which the Executive Leader undertook to provide further information outside of the meeting.

Having outlined his support for the suggestion made by Councillor P Hodgson-Jones regarding a possible working group to consider governance issues and the comments made by Councillor Davenport-Ray at the constructive manner in which committees work within the Combined Authority, Councillor Hassall took the opportunity to make a further point regarding their governance arrangements. Whilst he recognised that the Executive Leader was reflective of the viewpoints and opinions of the District Council, there was in fact nothing to prevent a leader taking a completely different view if they so wish which reflected a further weakness in the arrangements. He also suggested there was a need to have stronger links between the respective councils and their leaders.

Finally, Councillor J Neish made reference to the concerns of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had been expressed during the setting of the Mayoral precept, that there had been limited information as to why the precept was to be set at that level. However, information appeared now to be much more forthcoming on schemes that might be funded.

In concluding the discussion, the Executive Leader thanked Members for their comments and suggested that these might be best directed to the Combined Authority Chief Executive and respective officers and fed into the organisation.

73 OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS

A copy of the list of meetings held since the last meeting of the Council held on 21st February 2024 is appended in the Minute Book and Members were advised that any issues or questions could be raised in relation to these meetings.

Councillor C H Tevlin drew attention to the reduced attendance of the District Council's representative at meetings of the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel. It was agreed that the Chief Executive would review the matter outside of the meeting.

With reference to the recent meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee, Councillor J A Gray took the opportunity to draw attention to issues relating to staffing levels around procurement. Members were advised that a significant number of the internal audit actions currently had procurement issues addressed against them and procurement regulations were about to get more complicated and would require additional staffing resources. The Executive Councillor for Customer Services agreed with the observations which had been made regarding the need for additional staffing and had already raised the matter with the Chief Executive.

Also, with reference to the meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee, Councillor P Hodgson-Jones reported that the process for appointing Independent Persons to the Committee had been ongoing and would be reported to a future meeting of the Council. However, in view of the impact of these appointments on the size of the Committee a working group had been established to consider the terms of reference and the structure of the Committee. This would provide an opportunity to consider the way the

Committee works to delivery proper scrutiny of the Council's operations and support policy direction. A report would be forthcoming to Council in due course.

74 VARIATIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes to report.

The meeting ended at 21.26pm.

Chair

Public
Key Decision - No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Terms of Reference Review, Corporate Governance Committee

Meeting/Date: Corporate Governance Committee, 18th April 2024
Council, 22nd May 2024

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Customer Services – Councillor S Ferguson

Report by: Director of Finance & Corporate Resources

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Corporate Governance Committee should be regularly reviewed against CIPFA best practice standards and other examples of best practice from across the sector to ensure continuous improvement. A subgroup of the Committee has undertaken this review, its recommendations are noted in this paper.

The subgroup also considered the size of the Committee and whether this was effective. Its recommendations for changes to the makeup of the Committee are included in the report.

Recommendations:

The Corporate Governance Committee is

RECOMMENDED

- a) to endorse a variation to the Terms of Reference of the Corporate Governance Committee;
- b) to endorse the proposal to amend the Committee's membership as detailed in paragraph 2.1; and
- c) that the Terms of Reference of the Committee be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain current.

The Council is

RECOMMENDED

to approve the necessary variations to the Council's Constitution to reflect the revised Terms of Reference of the Corporate Governance Committee and the amendments to the membership of the Committee.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report is to bring to Committee the findings of the subgroup review of the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Corporate Governance Committee (CGC) and also the Committee membership.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) peer review of Internal Audit undertaken in March 2023 identified the Committee's ToR had not been regularly reviewed and may not reflect current legislation and Chartered body recommendations. It recommended the ToR be reviewed and changes updated to the Constitution. An ongoing annual review of the ToR was also recommended to ensure they remain current.

The subgroup considered the existing ToR for CGC against the model ToR recommended by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) for audit committees. The model ToR cover all the current legislation requirements and Chartered body recommendations which link to governance; however, it does not cover additional responsibilities which CGC holds for the Council in relation to Constitutional, Conduct and Regulatory Arrangements.

The subgroup recommends the model CIPFA ToR are adopted, with an additional section added to incorporate those duties relating to Constitutional, Conduct and Regulatory Arrangements. The revised ToR are attached to this document as Appendix A.

It was also noted that membership of CGC is twelve members plus two independent members. This is a larger Committee than is ideal and the subgroup has made the following recommendations for future membership:

1. That the Committee membership be reduced to seven members and up to two non-voting Independent Members,
2. Membership will not include Portfolio Holders/Executive Members, and
3. Group leaders are encouraged not to nominate themselves as committee members, but it was noted this may not always be achievable due to party numbers.

3. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 3.1 If the Committee does not review and update its ToR, it will not be able to demonstrate it is effectively fulfilling its statutory duties, which could lead to challenge of decisions, nor will it be able to demonstrate it has effective governance in place.

4. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The review of the ToR links into objective three of the Corporate Plan, *"Delivering good quality, high value for money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations"*.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 If the Committee does not update its ToR to reflect current legislation requirements and Chartered body recommendations, the Council will not be fulfilling its statutory duties.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Any amendments to the Committee's ToR or committee size will need to be updated in the Constitution.

7. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 7.1 The proposed decisions are necessary to ensure the Committee has ToR which reflect the current legislation and Chartered body recommendations, which in turn enable effective governance. The proposal to reduce committee size is to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the committee.

8. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Revised Terms of Reference, Corporate Governance Committee

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Karen Sutton, Director of Finance and Corporate Resources
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Email: Karen.Sutton@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE – CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Governance

The terms of reference should set out the committee's position in the governance structure of the authority.

Statement of Purpose

The committee's purpose is to provide an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of governance, risk and control arrangements. Its role in ensuring there is sufficient assurance over governance, risk and control gives greater confidence to all those charged with governance that those arrangements are effective.

The committee has oversight of both internal and external audit, together with the financial and governance reports, helping to ensure there are adequate arrangements in place for both internal challenge and public accountability.

Governance, Risk and Control

- ❖ To review the Council's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework, including the ethical framework, and consider the local code of governance.
- ❖ To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management in the Council.
- ❖ To monitor progress in addressing risk-related issues reported to the committee.
- ❖ To consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.
- ❖ To consider reports on the effectiveness of financial management arrangements, including compliance with CIPFA's Financial Management Code.
- ❖ To consider the Council's arrangements to secure value for money and review assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements.
- ❖ To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the Council from fraud and corruption.
- ❖ To monitor the counter fraud strategy, actions and resources.
- ❖ To review the governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations.

Financial and Governance Reporting

Governance reporting

- ❖ To review the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, including the Internal Audit Manager's annual opinion.
- ❖ To consider whether the annual evaluation for the AGS fairly concludes that governance arrangements are fit for purpose, supporting the achievement of the authority's objectives.

Financial reporting

- ❖ To monitor the arrangements and preparations for financial reporting to ensure that statutory requirements and professional standards can be met.
- ❖ To review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the Council.
- ❖ To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.

Arrangements for audit and assurance

To consider the Council's framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the Council.

External audit

- ❖ To support the independence of external audit through consideration of the external auditor's annual assessment of its independence and review of any issues raised by Public Sector Audit Arrangements (PSAA) or the authority's auditor panel as appropriate.
- ❖ To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports and the report to those charged with governance.
- ❖ To consider specific reports as agreed with the external auditor.
- ❖ To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.
- ❖ To consider additional commissions of work from external audit.
- ❖ To advise and recommend on the effectiveness of relationships between external and internal audit and other inspection agencies or relevant bodies.
- ❖ To provide free and unfettered access to the audit committee chair for the auditors, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the committee.

Internal audit

- ❖ To approve the internal audit charter.
- ❖ To review proposals made in relation to the appointment of external providers of internal audit services and to make recommendations.
- ❖ To approve the risk-based internal audit plan, including internal audit's resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurance and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources.
- ❖ To approve significant interim changes to the risk-based internal audit plan and resource requirements.
- ❖ To make appropriate enquiries of both management and the Internal Audit Manager to determine if there are any inappropriate scope or resource limitations.
- ❖ To consider any impairments to the independence or objectivity of the Internal Audit Manager arising from additional roles or responsibilities outside of internal auditing and to approve and periodically review safeguards to limit such impairments. To consider reports from the Internal Audit Manager on internal

audit's performance during the year, including the performance of external providers of internal audit services. These will include:

- updates on the work of internal audit, including key findings, issues of concern and action in hand as a result of internal audit work,
 - regular reports on the results of the QAIP.
 - reports on instances where the internal audit function does not conform to the PSIAS and LGAN, considering whether the non-conformance is significant enough that it must be included in the AGS.
- ❖ To consider the Internal Audit Manager's annual report, including:
- the statement of the level of conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and Local Government Application Note (LGAN) and the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan (QAIP) that support the statement (these will indicate the reliability of the conclusions of internal audit)
 - the opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control, together with the summary of the work supporting the opinion (these will assist the committee in reviewing the AGS).
- ❖ To consider summaries of specific internal audit reports as requested.
- ❖ To receive reports outlining the action taken where the Internal Audit Manager has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to the authority or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions.
- ❖ To contribute to the QAIP and in particular to the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place at least once every five years.
- ❖ To consider a report on the effectiveness of internal audit to support the AGS where required to do so by the accounts and audit regulations (see Appendix A).
- ❖ To provide free and unfettered access to the Corporate Governance Committee chair for the Internal Audit Manager, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the committee.

Accountability arrangements

- ❖ To report to those charged with governance on the committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks, financial reporting arrangements and internal and external audit functions.
- ❖ To report to full Council on a regular basis on the committee's performance in relation to the terms of reference and the effectiveness of the committee in meeting its purpose.
- ❖ To publish an annual report on the work of the committee, including a conclusion on the compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement.

Constitutional, Conduct and Regulatory Arrangements

- ❖ To undertake the following constitutional arrangements:

- Considering proposals to change the Council's Constitutional arrangements and making appropriate recommendations to the Council.
 - Consider the periodic electoral review and review District and Parish electoral arrangements including boundaries and other electoral matters.
 - Determination of Community Governance Reviews.
- ❖ To undertake the following conduct arrangements:
- The promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct within the Council.
 - To advise the Council on the adoption or revision of its Codes of Conduct for Members.
 - The promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct within the town and parish councils within Huntingdonshire.
 - To advise the Council on the adoption or revision of a Protocol for Member/Officer relations.
 - To advise the Council on the adoption of a Code of Conduct for Planning and monitoring operation of the Code.
- ❖ To undertake the following regulatory arrangements:
- Reviewing and monitoring the policy and procedure and arrangements for investigating disclosures under the Public Interests Disclosure Act 1999.
 - Consideration of reports by the Local Government Ombudsman including compensatory payments

Public
Key Decision - No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Appointment of Independent Members to Corporate Governance Committee
Meeting/Date:	Council, 22 nd May 2024
Executive Portfolio:	Executive Councillor for Customer Services, Cllr S Ferguson
Report by:	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Ward(s) affected:	All

Executive Summary:

At the meeting of the Council held on 22nd February 2023, Council approved the appointment of up to two non-voting Independent Members to the Corporate Governance Committee to enhance and support the independent assurances provided by the Committee. Council also approved the necessary variations to the Council's Constitution. The process to identify candidates has been completed and is reported for ratification by the Council.

A programme of publicity designed to generate expressions of interests from members of the public has been undertaken and several applications were received. A Selection Panel comprising the Chair and Vice-Chair, Councillors S Ferguson and M Hassall and supported by the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources met during the week beginning 18th March 2024 to interview four candidates and to make recommendations for consideration by the Council.

The Selection Panel have proposed, subject to Council approval that Messrs Philip Webb and Tarun Sakhrani be appointed to the Panel for a period of three years to April 2027. Both candidates have indicated that they would be happy to accept these positions.

It is currently not proposed to pay remuneration to these individuals.

Once the formal appointment process has been completed, inductions will be held, and Independent Members will be invited to their first Corporate Governance meeting in May.

Independent Members are expected to comply with the Council Procedure Rules that apply to meetings of the Corporate Governance Committee as set out in the Council's Constitution.

Recommendation(s):

The Council is

RECOMMENDED

to appoint Messrs P Webb and T Sakhrani as Members to the Corporate Governance Committee for a period up to 30th April 2027.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Karen Sutton, Director of Finance & Corporate Resources
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Public
Key Decision – No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title:	Local Government Association Governance Peer Challenge
Meeting/Date:	Cabinet – 16th April 2024 Corporate Governance Committee - 18th April 2024 Council – 22nd May 2024
Executive Portfolio:	Executive Councillor for Customer Services – Councillor S Ferguson
Report by:	Chief Executive
Ward(s) affected:	All

Executive Summary:

The Council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake an Audit Peer Challenge in March 2023. Peers made a number of recommendations during the review and an Action Plan was developed to address these points.

There is an expectation the LGA peer review team return to assess progress on recommendations within six months. Following appointment of the new Chief Executive and growing national interest in local government governance, audit and risk, the Council invited the peer review team to return to assess progress and provide independent advice on questions posed by the Corporate Government Committee and consider any new recommendations that should be implemented.

The peer team returned on the 28th of February 2024, having reviewed a number of documents prior to their arrival and whilst on site, gathered more information from twelve meetings; during which they met with twenty-seven people, which included a range of elected Members and Officers.

The peer team made five recommendations; the first concentrating on progress of the initial seventeen recommendations from the March 2023 visit, and the remaining four were new, having regard to wider corporate governance aspects. The body of the report also provides helpful insight and wider observations.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet/Committee is

RECOMMENDED

- (a) to receive the LGA Governance Peer Challenge report, Appendix 1, and note the recommendations; and
- (b) to note Appendix 2, which provides an update on progress against all the proposed recommendations.

The Committee

RECOMMENDS

- (a) that Council receive the LGA Governance Peer Challenge report, Appendix 1, and note the recommendations; and
- (b) that Council note Appendix 2, which provides an update on progress against all the proposed recommendations.

The Council is

RECOMMENDED

- (a) to receive the LGA Governance Peer Challenge report, Appendix 1, and note the recommendations; and
- (b) to note Appendix 2, which provides an update on progress against all the proposed recommendations.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To receive the LGA Governance Peer Challenge report, provide a timetable for the report to be received by the Corporate Governance Committee and Council and provide an update on progress against the recommendations since 28th February 2024.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY

- 2.1 There is a requirement to publish the LGA Governance Peer Challenge report within 12 weeks of receipt and the Council would do this in any event to promote transparency and good practice. The report may be found at Appendix 1 and the recommendations are set out within pages 6 and 7 of the report.
- 2.2 The report will be presented to the Corporate Governance Committee on 18th April 2024 and thereafter will oversee the progress against all recommendations. The report will also be presented to Council on 22nd May 2024.
- 2.3 The progress against recommendations table, found at Appendix 2, is presented alongside the report to demonstrate the improvements that have been made since 28th February 2024.
- 2.4 When the Corporate Peer Challenge is undertaken in May 2024, the team will be reviewing the progress of these recommendations.

3. ANALYSIS

- 3.1 The peer team immediately recognised the cultural journey the Council has been on over the last couple of years and with the arrival of the new Chief Executive, who has a governance background, there has been an opportunity for a fresh perspective to drive improvement across the Council in line with the administration's priorities.
- 3.2 There was recognition that the Risk Management Strategy was approved in November 2023 and it is intended to use this information to inform the internal audit reviews.
- 3.3 There was a recognition that 9 of original 17 recommendations had been completed although some disappointment that more progress has not been made. There were an additional 4 recommendations identified that would help the organisation make progress with strengthening wider corporate governance.
- 3.4 The peer team provided helpful insight and suggestions which has enabled officers to reinvigorate progress against the remaining 8 outstanding recommendations. Appendix 2 provides the updates against those recommendations and also references the new recommendations.
- 3.5 One of the main issues raised by the peer team relates to the Council's internal capacity to deliver, particularly around risk and internal audit.

The s.151 Officer has identified where additional capacity can be utilised to support the risk management function and will be recruiting temporary support for an initial period of 9 months. Furthermore, as the annual audit plan is finalised, additional support will be obtained from BDO, who have also been commissioned to undertake the External Quality Assessment.

3.6 The s.151 Officer is also progressing capacity issues within the procurement function of the Council. Whilst this is not specifically referenced within any recommendations by the peer team, the issue was raised by the Corporate Governance Committee. Contract management and procurement can impact on wider governance of the Council and the progress being made demonstrates the commitment to ensuring good practice and prioritisation of functions.

3.7 There are a number of other factors to consider, including;

(i) The role of the Monitoring Officer and whether the Council's current arrangements provide the support, guidance and advice required in a local government sector that has changed in recent years, with a heightened focus on governance more broadly. The Chief Executive is currently reviewing existing staff structures to consider how to strengthen the capacity of the role of Monitoring Officer.

(ii) Review all governance, roles and responsibilities and working in a political environment training and development for officers as well as members – it was pleasing to be able to advise the peer team that we had a range of training planned (which commenced on Monday 8th April 2024) and this did include such training specifically for officers.

Noting the reference to broader governance, this should include the Constitution and it is proposed to create a Constitution Review Working Group at Annual Full Council in May 2024 that will report into the Corporate Governance Committee to support recommendations to Council on any proposed changes that will improve overall governance and clarity.

3.8 There are other smaller points that are not necessarily contained within the recommendations but provide useful insight that officers will consider and incorporate into delivery of services to ensure the Council delivers against the corporate objective of doing our core work well, delivering good quality, high value-for-money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations.

4. KEY IMPACTS

4.1 The Council is required to demonstrate it operates with good governance and follows the standards published by CIPFA and it complies with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Where weaknesses in complying with

either of these are found, the Council has an obligation to respond to avoid challenge and intervention from DLUHC.

4.2 External audit relies upon the assurance provided by internal governance. If this is found to be lacking then it will be reflected through their audit opinion, resulting in loss of confidence in the Council's financial controls.

4.3 Cabinet, and Full Council, are reliant on the Corporate Governance Committee understanding and challenging the effectiveness of governance across the organisation; if the committee does not have the appropriate skills to undertake this then it is not providing valuable feedback.

5. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN

5.1 The actions are set out in Appendix 2 and will be monitored by the Corporate Governance Committee.

6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

6.1 The recommendations and general insight the peer report highlights will assist in delivering against the corporate objective of doing our core work well, delivering good quality, high value-for-money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications arising from the receipt of the peer report but as this relates to broader corporate governance requirements, implementing the recommendations will be key to the Council acting in accordance with wider legislative obligations.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The s.151 Officer has identified the additional resources required and has confirmed these may be met from existing budgets.

9. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – LGA Governance Peer Review

Appendix 2 – Progress on Recommendations

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

CONTACT OFFICER

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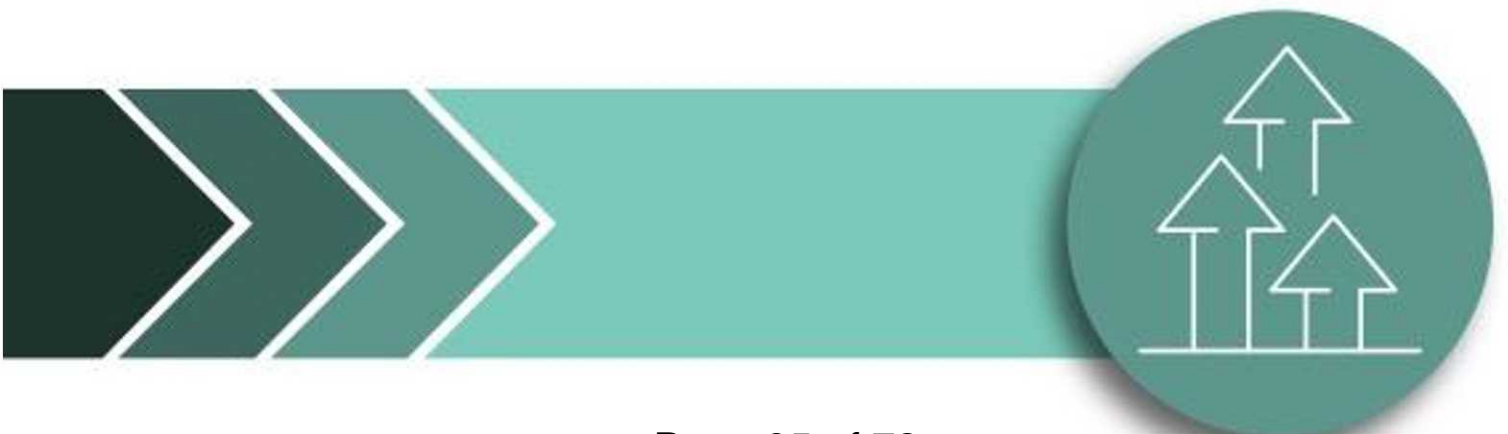
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LGA Governance Peer Challenge

Huntingdonshire District Council

28th February 2024

Feedback report





Contents

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1. Executive summary

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) invited the LGA to undertake an audit peer challenge in March 2023. Peers made a number of recommendations during the review and the council subsequently developed an action plan to address these. Following growing national interest in local government governance, audit and risk, and the appointment of a new chief executive in October 2023, the council invited the LGA back to review the progress made on their action plan and to provide independent advice on questions raised by the Corporate Governance Committee (CGC) around internal audit and risk.

Peers immediately recognised the cultural journey HDC has been on over the last two years when the council changed political control from conservative to a joint administration which saw the Independents, Liberal Democrats, Labour, and Green parties combine to lead the council collectively. This was a huge change for both members and officers who had worked in a conservative administration for nearly 50 years. Although the new administration had some experienced councillors, there were many that had never worked in politics, some of whom were selected to be on the executive. It is clear that the new administration hit the ground running and have spent the last two years developing a deeper understanding of the operation of the council, the processes, functions and governance which regulate and control how and what can be delivered.

The councillor's peers met and spoke with are clearly passionate about the district and regardless of politics want to deliver the best for their residents. However, it was also clear that they don't know what they don't know and would benefit from further training and development and opportunities to look beyond Cambridgeshire to seek out best practice, different models of delivery and new ideas to support them in their running of the council. Peers recommend HDC review all governance, roles and responsibilities and working in a political environment training and development for officers and members. Then develop a four-year programme to include induction, role descriptions and ongoing support to increase knowledge and awareness.

The appointment of a new chief executive has brought a fresh perspective, different skills and experience and an eagerness to drive improvement across the council in line with the administration's priorities. As a previous monitoring officer, she


understands the importance of good governance and the need for transparent decision making, especially in the current climate.

Peers were disappointed that more progress hadn't been made on the action plan. Through advanced reading and discussions on the day, they felt nine of the 17 recommendations had been completed or were on target to be delivered. They recognised capacity had been an issue and were sympathetic to this but some actions including reviewing the CGC terms of reference, using best practice examples to improve audit reports and conducting an internal and external audit assessment would not have been time consuming and should have been prioritised. Peers recommend HDC accelerate the delivery of actions from the audit peer challenge in March 2023 to ensure all 17 are complete or on course to be completed by May 2024 when the corporate peer challenge takes place. Priority needs to be given to conducting the internal and external assessments.

A new risk management strategy was approved in November 2023. The council wants to use this to drive the internal audit (IA) timetable of reviews. Some no opinion audits, referred to as a position statement and designed to give early advice and guidance have already been carried out and there was some evidence of risk being embedded in service plans along with finance to improve assurance. Peers were supportive of this approach but had concerns about the resources available to deliver.

The capacity of the IA team is currently reduced, and the risk officer is new to local government and the practice of risk management. Peers recommend the council provides immediate additional senior officer capacity and experience to the internal audit and risk functions to direct and oversee audit and risk development and actions. In parallel, it was recommended that HDC consider an options appraisal for future delivery of internal audit to ensure the council has the capacity, resilience and skills required.

The current IA reports to CGC are broad, contain information outside the core remit of internal audit services, and lack the detail required for members to see what is on track, overdue, who is responsible and what level of priority is assigned. In order to make them more succinct and purposeful, the content of internal audit reports need to focus on core business, and other senior officers' reports need to take



responsibility for the wider items such as the peer review action plan, governance developments and significant issues and updates. Examples of best practice reporting were previously provided. In addition, peers recommend that a review of the TOR of CGC would also enable the committee to focus on the core business of an “audit committee”, which with more focussed reports to the committee enable them to further enable good governance.

Peers felt the council would benefit from additional monitoring officer (MO) support, particularly at senior leadership team (SLT) and at committee meetings including the CGC to provide statutory officer advice. This would also support the requirement of wider statutory officer input into corporate reports on governance. Although there was assurance provided to the peer review team that reactive governance advice was available there were questions raised concerning the current shared service arrangements and if they were providing the capacity, accountability and proactive governance leadership required by the Council during this period of significant transition. Peers felt consideration should also be given to the MO reporting to the head of paid service to ensure the status and influence of this key statutory role.

2. Key recommendations

There are a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the council:

2.1 Recommendation 1

Accelerate the delivery of actions from the audit peer challenge in March 2023 to ensure all 17 are complete or on course to be completed by May 2024 when the corporate peer challenge takes place. Priority needs to be given to conducting the internal and external assessments.

2.2 Recommendation 2

Provide immediate additional senior officer capacity and experience to the internal audit and risk functions to direct and oversee audit and risk development and actions. Alongside this;

- consider an options appraisal for future delivery of internal audit to ensure the council has the capacity, resilience and skills required.
- review the content of internal audit reports to ensure they focus on core business, and other senior officer reports take responsibility for the wider items, such as the peer review action plan, governance developments and significant issues and updates.


2.3 Recommendation 3

Evaluate the capacity and status of the monitoring officer against the needs of the council to ensure accountability and leadership of governance best practice and statutory compliance in accordance with LGIU and LLG recommendations on the Changing Role of the Monitoring Officer [Changing Role of the MO Report](#). The post would also benefit from reporting to the head of paid service.

2.4 Recommendation 4

Following approval of new terms of reference for the Corporate Governance Committee (CGC) and a review of its membership;

- Conduct a skills audit to support the development of a programme of training and



development for members

- Ensure that a development plan is in place to increase the scores of the self-assessment
- Should the model terms of reference be approved, the additional items covered by the CGC (standards, constitution and elections) need to be considered as to where these responsibilities should sit going forward.

2.5 Recommendation 5

Review all governance, roles and responsibilities and working in a political environment training and development for officers as well as members. Then develop a four-year programme to include induction, role descriptions and ongoing support to increase knowledge and awareness.

3. Summary of the peer challenge approach

3.1 The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peers were:

- Cllr Sally Morgan – Chair of Audit and Governance, Teignbridge District Council
- Heloise MacAndrew - Director of Law and Governance, Lancashire County Council
- Emma Hodds – Chief of Staff, Broadland and South Norfolk Councils
- Kirsty Human - LGA Peer Challenge Manager

3.2 Scope and focus

The council is seeking assurance that internal audit and governance arrangements for internal audit at HDC are appropriate, with particular reference to:

1. Line management responsibilities for risk, internal audit and finance and assurance of the independence of internal audit
2. The extent to which the assurance plan is appropriately informed by risk
3. Corporate capacity for risk strategy and management
4. The effectiveness of the 'three lines' individually and collectively
5. The effectiveness of arrangements for risk identification and mitigation
6. The effectiveness and independence of the Corporate Governance Committee including consideration of the committee's terms of reference.
7. The scope and quality of Head of Internal Audit reports to the Corporate Governance Committee
8. The effectiveness of management's response to internal audit findings and recommendations
9. Member understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of members and officers in the context of relevant content within the Constitution.

3.3 The peer challenge process

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent one day onsite at Huntingdonshire District Council, during which they:

- Gathered information and views from more than 12 meetings, in addition to further research and reading.
- Spoke to more than 27 people including a range of council staff and elected members.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members.

4. Feedback

4.1 Line management responsibilities for risk, internal audit and finance and assurance of the independence of internal audit

Within a council structure, there are a number of options for where the internal auditor (IA) can report for management purposes. It is best practice for this to be either the chief executive/head of paid service, the section 151/chief finance officer or the monitoring officer. It is the role of the head of paid service to determine where IA should report depending on individual council circumstances. [The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards](#) require the IA to have clear unfettered access to the chief executive/head of paid service, the section 151/chief finance officer, monitoring officer and Audit Committee.

Through discussions with members and officers, peers identified a need to further clarify the roles and responsibilities of the [key statutory officers](#) – often referred to as the golden triangle:

- A head of the paid staff – usually the chief executive (or managing director) who advises councillors on policy, procedure, and legislation.
- A monitoring officer – responsible for advising councillors of the legal framework within which they operate, and for ensuring that they understand if their decisions or actions could lead to a legal challenge or be found to be maladministration. They are also responsible for matters relating to member & officer conduct, the constitution and reporting on illegality.
- A Section 151 officer – usually the director of finance, whose task it is to monitor the financial affairs of the council and to ensure that financial affairs are properly managed.

The audit charter and strategy would also benefit from updating to clearly set out the roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines in relation to risk and governance. This would reduce the risk of ambiguity and ensure everyone had a clear understanding of how the roles work individually and collectively and who to speak to about any concerns. The LGA's [draft improvement and assurance framework for local government](#) provides some helpful guidance on this.

HDC has a shared legal service with Cambridge City Council and South

Cambridgeshire District Council. The monitoring officer (MO) role is shared across two councils with deputy monitoring officers in each authority to oversee the day-to-day operations. In reality this means that the deputy MO at HDC is acting as the defacto MO and sits on the senior leadership team (SLT) in that capacity. As the MO duties are personal to the MO role and cannot be delegated (except in the case of sickness or leave) peers recommended that the council would benefit from additional in person MO support, particularly at SLT and at committee meetings including the CGC to provide legal and governance advice. There is a risk, given the chief executives knowledge and experience that she will fill this void to the detriment of her other roles and responsibilities. Consideration should also be given to the MO reporting to the head of paid service and best practice in relation to the changing role of the MO to ensure capacity and status [Changing Role of the MO Report](#).

In addition to the part time head of internal audit post, there are three other posts - one part time qualified auditor, one part time trainee and one level three apprentice. A new risk officer has only recently been appointed. Peers felt both the internal audit and risk functions would benefit from additional senior support to add capacity, skills and expertise over the short term, to enable delivery of the action plan and implement the council's new approach to risk management and the actions required in relation to the internal audit service. The existing contract with BDO for IT audits is one option that could be utilised to deliver the more complex audits and provide wider strategic input, but it is recommended that HDC consider all options to increase capacity at pace.

In the longer term, peers suggest the council looks to develop an options appraisal for future delivery of the internal audit service. Options might include keeping the service in house, externalising, sharing with another local authority or a mixture of these. Consideration should be given to all available possibilities. Completing actions 12 (calculation of auditor's chargeable time and skills audit of the audit team) and 15 (opportunities to carry out data analytics) from the audit review will support the development of this proposal.

The council has a statutory duty to undertake an external quality assessment every five years. The previous audit review recommended this be done following an internal assessment of quality assurance and development of an improvement programme. The internal assessment is likely to take around three days and could be completed

by an external provider if capacity is an issue. Peers then recommend the external assessment against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) is completed and a draft report available for corporate peer challenge team in May 2024.

4.2 The extent to which the assurance plan is appropriately informed by risk

The internal audit annual plan is currently in production, so peers were unable to read and comment on this.

Peers propose this is an area of work the corporate peer challenge team can explore during their review in May.

4.3 Corporate capacity for risk strategy and management

4.4 The effectiveness of arrangements for risk identification and mitigation

The council adopted a new Risk Management Strategy on 14th November 2023. Work has begun on aligning the risk register with service plan development and the appointment of a new risk officer is assisting in this.

The previous audit review recommended that the council conduct a risk maturity assessment. This is not yet completed, and peers recommend it is added to the workplan for the new officer to coordinate.

Peers noted that the new risk officer is a junior appointment only four weeks into role and new to local government and risk. Clearly highly educated, willing and eager to develop the role, peers recommend the post holder undergoes a thorough induction to local government, is able to access wider network support and is provided with training and mentoring. Making more use of the skills and experience in other parts of the council would also help. For example, consider reviewing the management structure around risk and project management to create capacity and resilience to drive the councils risk programme and agenda.

The corporate risk register is a live document with a large number of risks on it. Peers suggest HDC takes a more detailed look at it to see if there are any changes needed to the scoring which would reduce the number needing corporate oversight. They also noted the need to further develop the corporate risk register action plan with more detail around mitigation measures and action being taken.

HDC has an electronic system for recording risks. Peers identified a need for the CGC to understand how this risk management system works and be familiar with how risks are escalated to the corporate risk register from the operational space and vice versa.

4.5 The effectiveness of the ‘three lines’ individually and collectively

Peers were satisfied that there are currently [three lines of defence](#) in place, although there is potential for improvements to be made in each area.

- First line – Operational - HDC includes identification of risks within annual service plans. At the time of peer’s visit, service plans were being developed. There is a role for the corporate peer challenge to look at these in details to assess this process and ensure the link through to senior management.
- Second line - Risk, inspection and compliance - Peers were concerned the new risk officer post was not experienced or senior enough to be responsible for this alone. They recommend additional skills and capacity to support development and resilience.
- Third line - Internal audit - Peers suggested there was further work to do to ensure the IA function had sufficient capacity, could complete the recommended actions from the previous review, and was focussed on the core activity of the service and prioritising higher risk areas as identified by the risk register.

4.6 The effectiveness and independence of the Corporate Governance Committee including consideration of the committees’ terms of reference

It was positive to see the CGC had completed their first self-assessment and agreed a process for doing this in future. Peers encourage the committee to produce an action plan to increase the lower scores from the self-assessment which will assist in strategic improvements and identification of ongoing goals for the audit committee as a basis for good governance practice.

Holding pre-meetings ahead of the CGC to discuss areas of focus was recognised as good practice and peers encourage this to continue.

At the time of the review, the council still needed to adopt the Cipfa best practice terms of reference for Audit Committees. Peers were told this was being discussed at the next CGC meeting. It was disappointing to hear this hadn't been done yet as it would have been an easy recommendation to implement from the previous audit review.

Another recommendation from the 2022 audit review was to review the role of CGC. This had not been completed to date and peers had a number of further reflections on this for the council to consider. They believe:

- The CGC remit is too broad and HDC should consider other committees/working groups to review areas such as the constitution, standards and electoral arrangements which are not a usual function of CGCs.
- After reducing the scope of the committee there is an opportunity to rename it to clarify its purpose. For example, Audit, Risk and Governance. A quick look at other councils will provide a number of options.
- The membership of the CGC is too large. In addition, the committee is about to appoint one or two independent members which will increase its numbers further. Peers advise the size of the committee is reviewed in line with best practice and to accommodate the new independent members. A quick look at other councils will provide a number of options.

Once these actions have been addressed, peers recommend a skills analysis is completed of all CGC members which is followed by a tailored training and development plan to support members in the best ways possible to undertake their roles.

The East of England has an Audit Forum which all chairs of Audit are invited to. It provides a place where Audit Committee chairs can come together and discuss issues of common concern, identify and share best practice, alert each other to emerging issues and, for newly appointed chairs, to pick up tips from more experienced colleagues. HDC have a place on the forum and peers encourage the chair/vice chair to attend as many meetings as possible to increase awareness of practice elsewhere in the region.

4.7 The scope and quality of Head of Internal Audit reports to the Corporate Governance Committee

Concerns had been raised at HDC regarding amendments being made to the head of internal audit (HIA) reports ahead of the CGC. Peers confirmed that it is common practice for HIA reports to be reviewed by SLT ahead of CGC and this helps to ensure there is collective ownership across the senior management.

Discussing this issue with members and officers and reviewing the reports, peers felt there were no material changes made to the core HIA report, moreover, the issue seems to be a misperception in the reports purpose. There is a confusion of responsibilities between the HIA role and other statutory roles and a lack of completeness in some areas of core information. In addition, the concerns raised about changes arise in relation to elements which are not core to the HIA report.

Reports are currently too broad and lack the detail required for members to see what is on track, overdue, who is responsible and what level of priority is assigned. Peers suggest the following improvements are made:

- Progress against the internal audit plan – to help the CGC see whether IA are on track to deliver their annual plan, more information about the state of progress in completing audits against original plans needs to be provided.
- Tracking of audit actions/ overdue audit actions and the service progress update – it would be normal practice for the HIA report to list this/ previous years' IA reports with the original recommendation, the priority assigned to it, the management response and date for implementation/ officer responsible for implementation, with further management updates, clearly headed as such, where actions are overdue.
- A summary at the start of the table about the number of management actions overdue would-be good practice. In the HDC report it's not fully clear which are the audit recommendations, and which are the management responses/updates.
- An update on resources available would normally be focused on any impacts on the team's ability to deliver the IA plan.
- There should be separate processes for management responses to be agreed

(and updates on delays to implementation) which the HIA would include in their report.

There are elements of the HDC report which are not standard parts of a HIA report and do not relate to the IA plan:

- Significant issues and updates
- Governance updates
- Peer review on governance action plan
- External governance developments

In most cases these would come under the heading of a governance improvement plan/action plan arising from an annual governance statement. As such, while the HIA would contribute to them, they should not be the sole officer responsible for them and it's therefore more appropriate that such work is reported separately and is a joint effort, with normal processes of contributions and review by relevant officers such as the MO or S151.

Examples of best practice HIA reports were put forward as part of the previous audit review. Further examples are:

[Northwest Leicestershire](#)

[Tunbridge Wells](#)

[Thanet](#)

Peers recommend the council reviews these to produce a version which suits their needs and presents this to the next CGC.

4.8 The effectiveness of management's response to internal audit findings and recommendations

In discussion with managers, it became clear that there needs to be more input from them into the IA forward plan/strategic and audit plan. Making it a more collaborative process will help with the organisations understanding and recognition of the value of IA. Very few, if any officers attend the CGC to report on their outstanding audit recommendations. It should be common practice for officers to provide an update to members on the reasons for non-completion and to explain the steps being taken to rectify.

The council is currently undertaking its annual service planning process which made it difficult for peers to ascertain the role of IA and the relationship to managers. Peers propose the CPC in May looks at the following areas in more detail:

- Review the effectiveness and operation of the internal boards under SLT – for example, is the assurance board monitoring outstanding audit recommendations?
- Assess the link between service planning, risk identification (and the internal audit forward plan), mitigations, resource allocation.
- Consider how annual service plans support the production of a three-yearly IA plan with a detailed annual plan.

The development of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) by the S151 officer is accepted practice and IA should feed their comments into this through the HIA Annual Opinion.

To avoid any confusion, where SLT disagree on IA recommendations there needs to be a mechanism for escalation to CGC for wider context. Being transparent about this will aid the understanding of members of the wider organisational issues.

4.9 Member understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of members and officers with reference to the constitution.

The audit review recommended a number of actions relating to good governance:

- HIA, MO and S151 to meet regularly to raise and resolve concerns.
- Carry out a governance review as part of establishing the new management team.
- Joint training for members and officers on good governance.

Peers understand that meetings take place between statutory officers, but the other recommendations are yet to be completed and the recommend these are actioned with pace.

Some member induction took place two years ago when the new administration was elected. It was challenging time for all, with many councillors new to the council and their additional roles. It was evident to peers that the council needs to invest in clarity

of roles and responsibilities particularly with regard governance and audit. HDC do have [member job descriptions](#) which could be refreshed to support members in all roles. There are many [examples](#) already in the public domain that can help with this.

Training and development were themes mentioned to peers by everyone they spoke with. There was a recognition that two years into running the council lots had been learned but there was always something new to learn especially as legislation and the external political environment was forever changing. Peers recommend a four-year member training plan is developed with member input which supports councillors from induction through to the next election.

In addition, officer induction and management training need to include information about working in a political environment and supporting committees as well as the impacts a change of control situation can have on a council. Officers need to quickly understand what information is available for all members, the administration and the opposition and this can be hard to identify at first.

Peers also recommend HDC takes a look at its constitution. If it is not feasible to do a full review, consider a staged approach to working through sections with a member working group to build confidence in the process and work within the capacity of the council.

4.10 Areas for the Corporate Peer Challenge to review

1. Completion of actions from the Audit review – March 2023
2. Review the extent to which the IA plan is appropriately informed by risk.
3. Revisit the effectiveness of the three lines of defence, individually and collectively.
4. Review the effectiveness and operation of the internal boards under SLT – for example, is the assurance board monitoring outstanding audit recommendations?
5. Assess the link between service planning, risk identification and the internal audit forward plan.
6. Consider how annual service plans support the production of a three-yearly IA plan with a detailed annual plan.
7. Extent to which the recommendations from this review have been acted upon.

5. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings.

Both the peer team and LGA are keen to build on the relationships formed through the peer challenge. The CPC process includes a progress review within twelve months of the CPC, which provides space for the council's senior leadership to update peers on its progress against the recommendations from this report.

In the meantime, Rachel Litherland, Principal Adviser for the east of England, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association and is available to discuss any further support required: rachel.litherland@local.gov.uk

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Ref	Suggestion	Comment by HDC	Proposed Action (Mgt)	Due Date	Audit Action Taken	Progress to February 2024	Comments form Peer Review March 2024
1.	Internal Audit Manager to facilitate or feed into a CIPFA Corporate Governance Committee self-assessment exercise and help to develop a training programme for members.	An effective CGC needs to have a balance of skills across the key elements of Risk Management, Finance and Audit and, where these skills are identified as missing or skewed, appropriate training is proposed to correct this.	IAM to facilitate a self-assessment exercise for committee members, feedback outcomes at a subsequent meeting with proposed actions for members to decide upon.	Feedback to CGC at Jan 2024 meeting.	In progress. A self-assessment exercise was carried out in September. This used the CIPFA checklist rather than the extensive toolkit as an initial indicator and included a discussion on skills based around those attending the session. The assessment is to be shared with whole committee and include all members' comments the committee's effectiveness. To be effective, the assessment needs to be completed by all members.	Updates of the exercise were shared at the January 2024 committee meeting. Chair has asked for a further session to be set up to discuss actions, this is being organised by Democratic Services.	Recommendation 1: Complete action by May 2024 peer review. All CGC members have been reminded to send their completed skills assessment to the S151 Officer as soon as possible. These will be consolidated and linked to training plans being arranged by Democratic Services.
2.	The Terms of Reference for the	To ensure the	The IAM to review	Review of	Still to be done.	Subcommittee	Recommendation 1:

	Corporate Governance Committee to be regularly/annually reviewed against CIPFA best practice standards and other example of best practice from across the sector to ensure continuous improvement.	Council's ToR reflect current legislation and chartered body recommendations, they should be reviewed on an annual basis.	ToR against CIPFA best practices and propose changes to the Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) to reflect any updates which are necessary.	ToR to be presented to CGC in Q4 of each financial year, in preparation for the new financial year. March 24	This has been deferred to after the self-assessment by committee has been completed so any additional responsibilities or changes can be made.	of CGC to review CIPFA models ToRs & report to May meeting	Complete action by May 2024 review. Action as agreed at March CGC
3.	Further questions for consideration by the CGC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could the MO/Deputy MO be more involved with the Corporate Governance Committee, by presenting the Annual Governance Statement, Corporate Code of Governance? • There are no declarations of interest recorded for the last 12 months. Are there any that have gone unrecorded? Is advice of the MO being taken on interests by the committee? • Could task groups or working groups of the committee be set up to give additional capacity to review areas of risk/financial strain in more detail? 	The AGS and Code of Corporate Governance were drafted by the S151 Officer in collaboration with the MO. Declarations of interest are requested at the start of all meetings and recorded in minutes.	No further action required. DMO to ensure new members are briefed on what is a declaration of interest as part of induction process.	Ongoing control. Ongoing control.	. Internal Audit has checked declarations made at meetings against those on declarations register. No anomalies were found. CGC will consider working groups as and when the need arises.		See Recommendation 3 below. Action complete. Action complete.
4.	The Corporate Governance Committee to consider receiving	This was the basis of the Peer Review and	Action complete	N/A	Completed	Done	Action complete.

	a briefing on CIPFA’s Internal Audit Untapped Potential report highlighting areas for action.	has already been made available to members. The Peer Review feedback, and this action plan accomplishes the action					
5.	Consider a review the role of the Corporate Governance Committee within the Constitution, to ensure the role of committee is clear and transparent.	This should be part of the review linked to action 2.	Per action 2	Per action 2			<p>Recommendation 1: Complete action by May 2024 review.</p> <p>This is part of action 2 above.</p> <p>Findings of review to be presented to CGC in April 2023.</p>
	<p>Governance review suggestions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Audit Manager, the Monitoring Officer and Director of Finance and Corporate Resources to consider regularly meeting to raise and resolve concerns. Carrying out a governance review (stock take) as part of establishing the new management team. Joint training for members and officers on good governance. 	The IAM and S151 already meet on a regular basis, with the DMO being invited as needed. We assume this relates to CLT recruitment, which is ongoing, and will be assessed once recruitment is complete. The self-assessment exercise for members in Action 1 should be extended to CLT as well, with similar follow up training.	No further action	Ongoing control.		CLT recruitment not yet completed (final CLT member joins mid-March). Assume this will also link in with the future peer review.	<p>Recommendation 1: Complete action by May 2024 review.</p> <p>CIPFA skills matrix assessment to be used.</p>

7.	Senior management and internal audit to work together to consider whether internal audit is best placed to undertake additional tasks outside of its core purpose such as Annual Governance Statement, Code of Corporate Governance review.	It is important the IAM has the opportunity to feed into the AGS and Code of Corporate Governance, but this has been drafted by the S151 Officer recently and will continue as such.	No further action	Completed	Completed		Action complete.
8.	Consideration be made to keeping the Internal Audit Manager informed of the outcomes of Management Team meetings or invited where relevant to observe discussions relating to key transformation projects to enhance strategic approach to auditing.	The IAM is already able to discuss ongoing projects/programmes with the relevant managers, and the risks arising.	Service management team meetings will be asked to update the IAM with any changes to service risks discussed. The IAM will engage with the PMO regarding current projects/programmes.	With immediate effect		IAM has been given full access, and encouraged, to discuss all projects with the relevant PMO or Service Manager	Action complete.
9.	The Internal Audit Manager to discuss key strategic risks from the register with each service area and devise an assurance plan covering the management of key risks.	The IAM has full access to all risks on the Council's 4Risk system and should use these to develop the action plan going forward.	Future IA plans to be linked to the Council's risk registers.	With immediate effect	The Risk Register has been used to formulate the Internal Audit plan. It is still the intention to review the operational audits in the Plan once Services have completed their risk register.	Service risks are due to be reviewed in the Service Plan review (due for submission 8 th March). This will then feed into the 2024/25 audit plan activity.	Recommendation 1: Complete action by May 2024 review. Audit plan to be created from service risk registers on 4Risk.

10.	Conducting a risk maturity assessment would be a good way to provide advice and increase the chances that the risk register can be relied on for planning purposes as maturity increases.	Once the Council's Risk Management Strategy has been approved and distributed, this will be the next stage of developing its risk management robustness.	A risk maturity exercise to be undertaken.	Within six months of the revised Risk Strategy being approved.	Risk Management Strategy was approved on 14th November, the risk maturity assessment can now commence.	New Risk & Controls Officer recruited to fill the vacancy left by the previous officer's resignation. Risk register review work will commence with the Service Plan development.	Recommendation 1: Complete action by May 2024 review.
11.	Internal Audit considers areas in the assurance plan where a 'position statement' style approach could be used to provide advisory support for new or developing areas.	IA is already developing this methodology and using it in specific areas across the Council.	No further action required.	With immediate effect.	Completed		Action complete
12.	A calculation of auditor's chargeable time (i.e., available audit days minus annual leave, management commitments, training days and ad-hoc/investigatory work) to be undertaken.	The methodology for calculating the number of audit days available has been developed as part of the planning for 2023/24.	The calculation of available days to continue to be used as a measure of IA capacity.	With immediate effect.	The resource plan has been designed.	Resource plan designed but still be allocated to plan.	Recommendation 1: Complete action by May 2024 review. This will be completed as part of the Annual Audit Plan.

	In addition, a skills and knowledge assessment of the audit team to be undertaken once an assurance plan for 2023/24 has been devised. If a shortfall is identified, this to be reported to senior management and CGC for resolution.	The skills and knowledge assessment can be undertaken once the current recruitment exercise for IA has been completed.	Undertake skills and knowledge assessment of IA team	Within three months of current recruitment exercise completing.	The skills and knowledge assessment is still to be undertaken but a skills matrix has been started to capture the qualifications, experience, skills and preferences for each auditor.		
13.	The internal assessment to reference available evidence to support conformance for each standard in preparation for a full External Quality Assessment.	The Council has a statutory duty to undertake an External Quality Assessment every five years. The internal assessment, and collection of evidence is the initial stage of this, to identify area of non-compliance.	IAM to undertake internal assessment of IA and to develop a plan for achieving areas of non-compliance.	To be completed by 31st March 2024		Update awaited from IAM.	Recommendation 1: Complete action by May 2024 review. BDO has since been commissioned to undertake review with report ready by May 2024 review.
14.	A detailed QAIP (quality assurance & improvement plan) to be developed shared and discussed with senior management and the CGC. QAIP to include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas of all perceived partial conformance with PSIAS 	This is a follow on from action 13 and is the detailed plan for achieving compliance.	IAM to develop internal assessments outcomes into a QAIP, including training needs and performance metrics.	To be completed by 30th June 2024.	Development of the QAIP has commenced.		Recommendation 1: Complete action by May 2024 review. This will be dependent upon the outcomes of the BDO report.

	<p>and LGAN with actions to develop into conformance with a timeframe and responsible officer allocated for each.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team training requirements; covering areas of emerging risk such as climate, artificial intelligence, cyber security, culture, data analytics. <p>Performance metrics measured by the team with stretching targets to demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement. These should be agreed with the CGC and Senior Management and reported at least annually.</p>						
15.	<p>Internal Audit to continue to look for opportunities to carry out data analytics and invests in skills in this area for the future. In the meantime, the team can suggest data maturity enhancements in each area audited if full population testing cannot be carried out.</p>	<p>These are key tools to complement the work of the IA team and their deployment is key to maintaining the effectiveness of the team. However, this is an action that should follow the development and implementation of the QAIP.</p>	<p>Following completion of the QAIP, the IAM to consider how these skills can be developed and implemented within the team.</p>	<p>To be completed by 31st December 2024.</p>			<p>Recommendation 1: Complete action by May 2024 review.</p> <p>Following BDO's assessment a submission to be made to New Ideas process to enable investment in the appropriate skills/software.</p>
16.	<p>Internal Audit to consider its approach to supporting the Assurance Board forward plan and Terms of Reference review</p>	<p>The IAM sits on the Assurance Board and is able to request items to be covered at the board. A</p>	<p>No further action required.</p>	<p>Completed.</p>			<p>Action complete</p>

	<p>in addition to supporting the CGC forward planner for in areas such as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Compliance Framework • Health and Safety assurance • Best Interest Reports Lessons Learnt • Governance Stocktake; • Covid Review • Counter Fraud and Whistleblowing Strategy, Actions, Resources, Review of risks, • Strategic/Complex Partnerships/Collaborations review. 	<p>items to be discussed is being formulated and the opinion of the IAM should be sought as part of this.</p>					
57.	<p>The Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and Internal Audit Manager to work together to formally appoint the outsourced IT audit provider so that assurance can be provided to support the opinion.</p>	<p>A tender was run, and a contract offered to the successful bidder. However, the provider declined the offer due to internal pressures on their side.</p> <p>The provider that was runner up to the tender has been approached.</p>	<p>To appoint the provider that was runner up, or to re-run the tender process.</p>	<p>Update to be provided to CGC at 12th July 2023 meeting.</p>	<p>Complete - contract signed and audit plan for IT areas assessed/ suggested, subject to agreement. 3 reviews are proposed for 2023/24 although ICT have stated they may not be able to accommodate.</p>		<p>Action complete</p>
<p>New Recommendations, March 2024</p>							
1	<p>Accelerate the delivery of actions from the audit peer challenge in March 2023 to</p>						<p>Our ICT auditors, BDO have been engaged to undertake an internal assessment of HDC's</p>

	ensure all 17 are complete or on course to be completed by May 2024 when the corporate peer challenge takes place. Priority needs to be given to conducting the internal and external assessments.						Internal Audit team to identify those areas where improvement is needed before a full external assessment is commissioned.
2	<p>Provide immediate additional senior officer capacity and experience to the internal audit and risk functions to direct and oversee audit and risk development and actions.</p> <p>Alongside this;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> consider an options appraisal for future delivery of internal audit to ensure the council has the capacity, resilience and skills required. <input type="checkbox"/> review the content of internal audit reports to ensure they focus on core business, and other senior officer reports take responsibility for the wider items, such as the peer review action plan, governance developments and significant issues and updates. 						<p>A resource request for an interim Risk Manager has been submitted. This role will embed the new risk management strategy through the creation of a training programme, reporting tools, review of the current risk register and additional support and guidance to the existing Risk and Controls Officer.</p> <p>In addition, we have requested two further Procurement roles (a Procurement Manager and a Contracts Manager) to mitigate procurement risks across the organisation.</p>
3	Evaluate the capacity and status of the monitoring officer against the needs of the						The Chief executive is reviewing Monitoring Officer needs for the future and considering

	<p>council to ensure accountability and leadership of governance best practice and statutory compliance in accordance with LGIU and LLG recommendations on the Changing Role of the Monitoring Officer Changing Role of the MO Report. The post would also benefit from reporting to the head of paid service.</p>					<p>options for addressing these.</p>
<p>4 Page 64 of 72</p>	<p>Following approval of new terms of reference for the Corporate Governance Committee (CGC) and a review of its membership;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a skills audit to support the development of a programme of training and development for members <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that a development plan is in place to increase the scores of the self-assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Should the model terms of reference be approved, the additional items covered by the CGC (standards, constitution and elections) need to be considered as to where these responsibilities should sit going forward. 					<p>Work has already commenced on reviewing the terms of reference for CGC, with a working group formed and a remit to report back to CGC in April. This includes considering where responsibilities not covered by the CIPFA model terms of reference should sit.</p> <p>Members have been asked to complete the skills matrix and this will be presented to committee when complete. A training programme can then be developed.</p> <p>Additional training has already been organised</p>

						to provide Finance training.
5	Review all governance, roles and responsibilities and working in a political environment training and development for officers as well as members. Then develop a four-year programme to include induction, role descriptions and ongoing support to increase knowledge and awareness.					<p>All members were invited to the Officer and Member relationship training session on 8th April 2024.</p> <p>Two independent members have been recruited to assist CGC and provide further challenge.</p>

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HDC Councillor Expenditure 2023/24

		Basic Allowance - HDC	Chair Special Responsibility Allowance	Combined Authority SRA	Development Management SRA	Executive SRA	Expenses Reimbursement	Mileage NT / Casual Mileage Scheme	Vice Chair Special Resp Allowance	Totals
22825	Thomas Sanderson	£4,917.96		£1,806.96		£11,066.04	£0.00	£27.00		£17,817.96
23639	Eric Butler	£4,917.96			£663.96		£0.00			£5,581.92
24491	Douglas Dew	£4,917.96		-£95.72	£663.96		£0.00			£5,486.20
25034	Stephen Criswell	£4,917.96					£0.00			£4,917.96
25037	Jonathan Gray	£4,917.96					£0.00			£4,917.96
30489	Richard West	£4,653.55					£0.00			£4,653.55
30828	Patricia Jordan	£4,917.96	£2,951.04		£663.96		£0.00			£8,532.96
32688	Patrick Kadewere	£4,917.96					£0.00			£4,917.96
33071	Gillian Holmes	£1,050.96					£0.00			£1,050.96
33246	Sarah Conboy	£4,917.96		£5,163.96		£14,754.00	£598.80			£25,434.72
33361	Ian Gardener	£4,917.96			£663.96		£4.00	£305.55		£5,891.47
33565	Timothy Alban	£4,917.96					£0.00			£4,917.96
34561	Barry Banks	£4,917.96	£6,639.96				£0.00			£11,557.92
34564	Margaret Beuttell	£4,917.96					£0.00	£289.80		£5,207.76
34566	Simon Bywater	£4,917.96					£3.40	£147.60		£5,068.96
34567	Jeffrey Clarke	£4,917.96					£0.00	£70.20		£4,988.16
34569	Stephen Corney	£4,917.96		£1,032.96	£663.96		£0.00			£6,614.88
34573	Kevin Gulson	£4,917.96			£663.96		£0.00	£273.60		£5,855.52
34575	David Keane	£4,917.96					£0.00			£4,917.96
34577	Jonathan Neish	£4,917.96		£1,131.50	£663.96	£774.96	£5.50	£74.25		£7,568.13
34580	Douglas Terry	£4,917.96					£0.00			£4,917.96
34583	Samuel Wakeford	£4,917.96			£580.07	£8,115.00	£0.00			£13,613.03
50185	Marion Kadewere	£4,917.96					£0.00			£4,917.96
50229	Benjamin Pitt	£4,917.96				£8,115.00	£0.00			£13,032.96
50480	Sally Ann Howell	£4,917.96					£0.00	£295.20	£1,770.96	£6,984.12
50481	Roger Brereton	£4,917.96			£663.96		£0.00	£205.20		£5,787.12
50482	Graham Welton	£4,917.96					£0.00	£108.00		£5,025.96
50483	Nicholas Wells	£4,917.96	£2,951.04				£0.00	£80.10		£7,949.10
50484	Michael Burke	£4,917.96	£4,425.96				£4.60	£148.50		£9,497.02
50485	Joanna Harvey	£4,917.96					£0.00		£885.00	£5,802.96
50486	Ross Martin	£4,917.96					£0.00			£4,917.96
50487	Catherine Gleadow	£4,917.96	£5,901.96				£0.00			£10,819.92
50488	Ann Blackwell	£4,917.96					£0.00		£885.00	£5,802.96
50489	Lara Davenport-Ray	£4,917.96			£593.37	£8,115.00	£56.90	£87.75		£13,770.98
50490	Shariqa Mokbul	£4,917.96					£0.00		£2,655.96	£7,573.92
50491	Julie Kerr	£4,917.96	£5,901.96				£0.00			£10,819.92
50492	Simone Taylor	£4,917.96				£8,115.00	£0.00			£13,032.96
50493	Stephen Ferguson	£4,917.96				£8,115.00	£0.00			£13,032.96
50494	David Shaw	£4,917.96					£0.00			£4,917.96
50495	Ian Taylor	£4,917.96					£0.00			£4,917.96
50496	Deborah Mickelburgh	£4,917.96	£6,639.96				£0.00			£11,557.92
50497	Nathan Hunt	£4,917.96					£0.00		£1,770.96	£6,688.92
50498	Martin Hassall	£4,917.96		£1,032.96	£72.50	£6,631.61	£0.00	£121.05		£12,776.08
50500	Stephen McAdam	£4,917.96			£663.96		£0.00	£15.30	£1,770.96	£7,368.18
50501	Marcus Pickering	£4,917.96					£0.00	£144.00		£5,061.96
50502	Adela Costello	£4,917.96					£0.00			£4,917.96
50503	Richard Slade	£4,917.96			£663.96		£0.00			£5,581.92
50506	Charlotte Lowe	£4,917.96					£0.00	£169.20		£5,087.16
50507	Andrew Jennings	£4,917.96					£0.00			£4,917.96
50508	Stephen Cawley	£4,917.96					£0.00			£4,917.96
50510	Brett Mickelburgh	£4,917.96				£8,115.00	£0.00			£13,032.96
50511	Clare Tevlin	£4,917.96			£663.96		£0.00		£1,992.00	£7,573.92
50512	Paul Hodgson	£4,917.96					£0.00			£4,917.96
	Sum:	£256,520.47	£35,411.88	£10,072.62	£8,549.50	£81,916.61	£673.20	£2,562.30	£11,730.84	£407,437.42

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ANNEX B

**MEMBERS' ATTENDANCES
AT MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL, CABINET, COMMITTEES AND PANELS**

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24 (to 14th May 2024)

COUNCIL <i>(Met on 6 occasions)</i>			
Alban, T	5	Jordan, P A	4
Banks, B S	6	Kadewere, M	6
Beuttell, Mrs M L	6	Kadewere, P	6
Blackwell, A M	6	Keane D N	6
Brereton, R J	5	Kerr, J E	5
Burke, M J	6	Lowe, C A	6
Butler, E R	4	Martin, R	6
Bywater, S	5	McAdam, S R	6
Cawley, S	5	Mickleburgh, B A	6
Clarke, J	5	Mickleburgh, D L	6
Conboy, Mrs S J	6	Mokbul, S	3
Corney, S J	5	Neish, J	5
Costello, A E	4	Pickering, M Dr	6
Criswell, S J	3	Pitt, B M	6
Davenport-Ray, L	6	Sanderson, T D	6
Dew, D B	2	Shaw, D J	6
Ferguson, S W	5	Slade, R A	5
Gardener, I D	5	Taylor, I P	6
Gleadow, C M	5	Taylor, S L	6
Gray, J A	6	Terry, D	4
Gulson, K P	6	Tevlin, C H	6
Harvey, J E	6	Wakeford, S	5
Hassall, M A	5	Wells, N	5
Hodgson-Jones, P J	5	Welton, G J	4
Howell, S A	6	West, R J <i>(until 12/03/24)</i>	4
Hunt, N J	6		
Jennings, A R	6		

CABINET <i>(Met on 12 occasions)</i>			
Conboy, S J	11	Pitt, B M	10
Davenport-Ray, L	10	Sanderson, T D	12
Ferguson, S W	12	Taylor, S L	11
Hassall, M A <i>(until 25/01/24)</i>	6	Wakeford, S	11
Mickelburgh, B A	11		

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE <i>(Met on 8 occasions)</i>			
Blackwell, A M	8	Howell, S A	7
Butler, E R	3	Jennings, A R	7
Clarke, J	5	Kadewere, P	6
Gray, J A	6	Sanderson, T D	7
Harvey, J E	6	Taylor, I P	8
Hodgson-Jones, P J	6	Wells, N	8

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE <i>(Met on 13 occasions)</i>			
Brereton, R J	11	Mickelburgh, D L	12
Butler, E R	11	Mokbul, S	11
Corney, S J	10	Neish, J	8
Davenport-Ray, L <i>(until 21/2/24)</i>	10	Sanderson, T D	12
Dew, D B	5	Slade, R A	10
Gardener, I D	6	Tevlin, C H	10
Gulson, K P	11	Wakeford, S	10
Hassall, M A <i>(from 21/2/24)</i>	1		
Jordan, P A	9		
McAdam, S R	11		

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE <i>(Met on 6 occasions)</i>			
Blackwell, A M	6	Jordan, P A	4
Cawley, S	6	Keane, D N	5
Davenport-Ray, L <i>(from 21/2/24)</i>	2	Kerr, J E	4
Gleadow, C M	6	West, R J <i>(until 12/03/24)</i>	4
Hassall, M A <i>(until 21/2/24)</i>	4		

LICENSING AND PROTECTION COMMITTEE <i>(Met on 4 occasions)</i>			
Banks, B S	3	Howell, S A	4
Beuttell, M L	3	Jordan, P A	1
Bywater, S	4	Kadewere, P	4
Clarke, J	2	Terry, D	2
Costello, A E	4	Tevlin, C H	4
Criswell, S	2		
Ferguson, S W	3		

LICENSING COMMITTEE <i>(Met on 3 occasions)</i>			
Banks, B S	2	Howell, S A	3
Beuttell, M L	3	Jordan, P A	1
Bywater, S	3	Kadewere, P	3
Clarke, J	2	Terry, D	2
Costello, A E	3	Tevlin, C H	3
Criswell, S	1		
Ferguson, S W	3		

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS) <i>(Met on 11 occasions)</i>			
Alban, T	10	Kadewere, M	10
Burke, M J	10	Kerr, J E	11
Bywater, S	10	Lowe, C A	9
Cawley, S <i>(until 13/2/23)</i>	5	McAdam, S R	5
Criswell, S	7	Shaw, D J	9

Harvey, J E	8	Welton (from 13/12/23)	2
Hunt, N J	10		

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH) <i>(Met on 12 occasions)</i>			
Blackwell, A M	11	Jennings, A	11
Cawley, S (from 13/12/23)	4	Martin, R	8
Corney, S J	8	Pickering, M Dr	11
Gardener, I D	10	Slade, R A	5
Gleadow, C M	12	Wells, N	10
Harvey, J E	9	Welton, G J (until 13/12/23)	3
Howell, S A	10		

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (JOINT) <i>(Met on 2 occasions)</i>			
Alban, T D	2	Hunt, N J	2
Blackwell, A M	2	Jennings, A	2
Bywater, S	2	Kadewere, M	2
Burke, M J	1	Kerr, J W	2
Cawley, S	2	Lowe, C A	2
Corney, S J	2	McAdam, A R	2
Criswell, S	1	Martin, R	1
Gardener, I D	2	Pickering, M Dr	2
Gleadow, C M	2	Shaw, D J	2
Harvey, J E	2	Slade, R A	2
Howell, S A	2	Wells, N	1
		Welton, G J	1

SENIOR OFFICER COMMITTEE <i>(Met on 2 occasions)</i>			
Beuttell, M L	2	Jordan, P A	2
Cawley, S	2	Sanderson, T D	1
Conboy, S J	2		

NB: This schedule represents the attendance record of Members at District Council meetings. Members' responsibilities in terms of external organisations to which they are appointed by the District Council and duties within respective wards is not recorded.

Meetings held between the despatch of the Council Agenda on 14th May 2024 and the date of the Council meeting have not been included.

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