

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL held at the council chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon on Wednesday, 30th March 2005.

PRESENT: Councillor I C Bates - Chairman
Councillors P J Downes, T V Rogers,
L M Simpson, C J Stephens and R G Tuplin

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

25. REVIEW OF COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

By reference to a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel undertook the annual review of the Constitution. The Panel were reminded of the procedure for the review in which the Cabinet and all Panels had been offered the opportunity to comment collectively on those aspects of the constitution which affected their terms of reference. Members had also been invited also to submit comments individually and Chief Officers and Heads of Service similarly had been requested to highlight issues which had arisen based on practical experience of the operation of the Constitution.

The Panel discussed the frequency with which the Constitution was reviewed. Having undertaken a review each year since its introduction in 2000 and given that changes could be made at anytime, Members agreed that in future the Constitution should be reviewed comprehensively at biennial intervals. Otherwise and having considered the issues raised in the report, the Panel agreed to:

RECOMMEND

- (a) that with regard to Article 15, Paragraph 3 (a), the following words be added after "Monitoring Officer" - "Proposals for changes may be considered at any time, but a comprehensive review will be undertaken in alternate years, beginning with the municipal year 2007/08."
- (b) that the following words be added after paragraph (i) of Section 4 of Article 12:
 - "(j) Deputy Monitoring Officer - in the absence or at the direction of the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer, the Head of Legal and Estates shall act as Deputy Monitoring Officer."
- (c) that the following words be added after paragraph (e)

of Section 5 of Article 12:

“(f) Deputy Chief Finance Officer – in the absence of the Director of Commerce and Technology and Chief Finance Officer, the Head of Financial Services shall act as Deputy Chief Finance Officer.”

- (d) that Paragraph 12 of the Council Procedure Rules (Standing Orders) be deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following text -

“12 ANNUAL STATE OF THE DISTRICT ADDRESS

12.1 PROCEDURE

The Chairman will invite the Leader to address the Council at it's autumn meeting on the State of the District.

12.2 RESPONSE

The Chairman will invite the Leader (s) of the opposition to respond to the address.

12.3 DISCUSSION

The ensuing discussion in which a Member may speak once and to which only paragraphs 11.4, 11.12 and 11.13 of the Rules of Debate will apply, will be chaired by the Chairman.”

- (e) that oral questions be retained on the Agenda for meetings of the Council at which the item on the Annual State of the District Address is tabled;
- (f) that any changes to the Constitution with regard to Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules be deferred pending the outcome of the Panel's review of existing arrangements;
- (g) that suggestions with regard to the introduction of:
- ◆ a facility to enable the Chairman of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel to invite individuals in the public gallery to speak at meetings;
 - ◆ arrangements for the appointment of substitute members; and
 - ◆ a public forum at full Council meetings

– be not supported.

- (h) that, subject to a variation to the limits on budget transfers to £50,000 for revenue budgets and £100,000 for capital budgets and the clarification of procedures to require project appraisals for new

schemes proposed in the Medium Term Plan, and for changes to approved schemes of a non-technical nature, the amended Code of Financial Management as appended to the report now submitted be approved.

- (i) that the revised Code of Procurement as appended to the report now submitted be adopted.
- (j) that the provisions contained in the Employees' Code of Conduct relating to sponsorship be retained but that further recommendations with regard to possible amendment of the Code be deferred; and

It was also –

RESOLVED

that the position with regard to the desirability of Members serving on the Development Control and Licensing and Protection Panels and/or the Licensing Committee receiving appropriate training in those roles be commended albeit that it cannot be imposed as a mandatory requirement.

26. HOUSING BENEFIT COMPLAINT - AWARD OF COMPENSATION

The Panel received and noted a report by the Head of Revenue Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on a complaint against the Council by a member of the public with regard to the assessment of applications for housing benefit and the terms of a compensatory payment approved as a consequence thereof.

Chairman