

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE held in CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, CAMBS, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 18 June 2025.

PRESENT: Councillor M J Burke – Chair.

Councillors J A Gray, P J Hodgson-Jones, A R Jennings, D J Shaw, I P Taylor and P Webb.

APOLOGIES An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor N Wells.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 25 March 2025 and 15 May 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

6. UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2024/25

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) completing the processes for publishing the Council's unaudited Statement of Accounts for 2024/25.

In setting out the report, the Corporate Director – Finance & Resources thanked the Finance Team and colleague service managers for their hard work in achieving this position. The required timetable had been met and that was a tribute to their efforts.

In response to a question regarding the term “largely consistent” which was used in the report, she clarified that it was used purely in case anything arose which the Council needed to do better. There was not anything significant that was not in line with governance requirements and in broad terms the Council complied with code of conduct regulations, but this term was used just in case there was anything that did come up.

In response to a question regarding the remit of the Risk and Controls Group and who was on it, she would come back to the Committee with more details. As the Council did not have its own risk officer, the Group had not met as frequently, however there was an advert for the role of a Risk Control Officer who, when appointed, would then reinvigorate that work being done by the Group.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- A. to consider and approve the Annual Governance Statement (Appendix 1);
- B. to consider and approve the unaudited Statement of Accounts for 2024/25 (Appendix 2); and
- C. to consider and approve the Notice of Publication (Appendix 3).

7. EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S ANNUAL PLANNING REPORT FOR 2024/25

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which presented the External Auditor's Annual Planning Report for 2024/25.

Ms C Mellons, the Council's Audit Partner set out the report, making particular reference to the executive summary section that detailed the rebuilding of assurance, and that guidance was awaited from the national audit officer around the rebuilding of assurance around reserves. This guidance had now been released so as a firm Ernst and Young LLP were working through that.

The Corporate Director – Finance & Resources explained that an Interim Procurement Manager was in place until September 2025, and a permanent role was about to go out. The team had already recently secured 2 new Procurement Officers, and the admin supporting the team had increased so there was an increase in the roles of the Procurement area, which would be further enhanced by the appointment of a permanent Manager.

Mr D Harris, Partner, RSM UK further clarified that there was a Procurement Audit in the 2025/26 Internal Audit Programme.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

to comment and note the External Auditor's Annual Planning Report set out at Appendix 1.

8. INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which set out a summary of the work undertaken by the Internal Audit Service since the Committee last met in March 2025.

Mr D Harris, Partner, RSM UK set out the report and commented that at the time of the publication of the papers, Cyber Essentials readiness was a draft; this had since been finalised which completed the programme of work that was brought to the Committee in the February and March meetings, which was positive.

The Chair thanked the team for their work.

In response to a question concerning the Commercial Estates Report which was listed in the papers as “Limited Assurance”, the Chief Executive clarified that every single report identifying weakness was taken very seriously. Furthermore, some of the proposed areas for internal audit were proposed by herself and the Corporate Director – Finance & Resources because of the seriousness which they took around the internal audit function, and she wanted to give this strong assurance to the Committee.

The Corporate Director – Finance & Resources also commented regarding the Commercial Estates Report and explained that a slightly revised approach was presented to the Corporate Leadership Team as to how to segment some of this work, particularly with regard to rent reviews, so there had been immediate steps taken to add some strategic resource. Recruitment had closed in the previous week which shortlisted for a further Estates Officer, and alternatives were being looked at to ensure the Council was maximising assets and making sure we were about all of our properties, not only to support the valuation work but also preparations for LGR, where it was essential that the Council was clear about the state of its properties and rent reviews. It was clear that the Council needed to make the most of its assets, and that this work was done with appropriate diligence.

In response to a request from the Committee, the Corporate Director – Finance & Resources and Mr D Harris, Partner, RSM UK would reflect on how to include more detail in the reports, rather than a summary of them.

In response to a question from Councillor Gray, the Chief Executive clarified that the Internal Governance Board meetings were formally Minuted and an action log reviewed in terms of actions arising, so that due diligence was followed and there was an evidence based structure in case any issues did arise.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

to comment and note the update on work undertaken by Internal Audit in the period from March 2025 to June 2025.

9. DRAFT ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2024/25

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which set out the draft Annual internal audit report for 2024/25, based on the professional judgement of the partner from RSM acting in the capacity of Head of Internal Audit.

In response to a question from Councillor Gray as to whether reassurance could be given that the recommended actions with regards to the One Leisure Pool Operations have been dealt with, the Chief Executive would provide a written response to the Committee with further details.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

to note, comment and accept the draft Annual internal audit report for 2024/25.

10. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received and noted a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on progress of actions in response to any decisions taken at previous meetings.

In response to a question from Councillor Gray, the Chief Executive commented that under the current Government timescales, HDC would be fully operational until 1 April 2028, so if there were any elements in the Constitution that needed to be addressed, they would be addressed. This was important in delivering good governance and effective decision making. She agreed with the suggestion that if things did need to be done before 2028, the pace could be picked up with regards to the Working Group. Furthermore, the new Monitoring Officer would be all over this as part of their role.

Chair