

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, 26 November 2025.

PRESENT: Councillor M J Burke – Chair.

Councillors B S Chapman, J A Gray, A R Jennings, D J Shaw and I P Taylor.

APOLOGY(IES): Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor P J Hodgson-Jones and P Webb.

33. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 September 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Shaw being listed as present in the meeting.

34. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Taylor declared an interest in respect of Minute No. 25/37 as he was a landlord of properties within the Council area and wished to ask a question regarding the Renters' Rights Act and its implication on the Council, rather than himself. After clarification with the Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer, he confirmed he did not consider himself to have an interest a reasonable person would think would influence his participation, and as such the interest was considered as a non-pecuniary interest.

Councillor Chapman stated that his register of interest's form needed updating as he had properties that were previously owned under a benevolent letting company which had been disposed of but which still appeared on his register of interest's form.

35. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) setting out amendments to the Council's Constitution to update the Council Procedure Rules and to establish a mechanism for any Councillor to act as a substitute on a Council body.

The Elections & Democratic Services Manager set out the report which summarised the work the Constitution Review Working Group had considered to date. Attention was drawn to Appendix 2 to the report where some minor tidying of paragraphs needed to take place, which would be addressed for the final report that would go to the Council meeting on 17th December.

In response to a question from the Committee around why there was a disparity between the 8 working days' notice required for a written

question to a member of the Cabinet, whereas there was only 5 working days' notice if a member of the public wanted to ask a question, the Elections & Democratic Services Manager advised that it was not a disparity and there was no reasoning for this. It was a legacy and there were other references in the Council Procedure Rules to 8 working days. Equally this was not raised by the Constitution Review Working Group.

In response to further questions from the Committee, the Elections & Democratic Services Manager clarified that if someone wished to submit a written question, they would need to reference that it was a written question as per the Constitution to ensure it would be picked up appropriately. The proposal was to formalise this process and subject to the proposal being approved, officers would write to Members to clarify the position in terms of the changes. In terms of paragraph 9.3, the intention was to include a standing item on the Council agenda where there were questions to the Chair's of Committees/Panels, as opposed to questions to the Chair of the Council, and the wording of that paragraph would be reviewed to clarify that intention. It was set out in statute under the 1972 Local Government Act when Annual Council meetings were to be held, to allow Councils flexibility. Furthermore, up until recently Annual Council had been held at 6.00pm, though exceptionally this year's meeting took place at 7.00pm.

The Elections & Democratic Services Manager further advised that paragraph 9.9 could be amended so that it was consistent with regards to having the option to ask a supplementary question to a written and oral question. Regarding some questions of clarification around the election of a Chair at an Annual Meeting, she would take that away for clarification, however there did not appear to be an issue. Furthermore, the recommendations in the report would go to the Full Council meeting on 17th December and the changes proposed would be effective from the date on which the Council made that decision. It was noted that the previous Constitution required that questions had to be relevant to matters for which the Council had powers or duties, which was no longer referenced in paragraph 11.1. This also would be reviewed for consistency with written and oral questions.

The Committee noted the amendments that had been suggested during the meeting and were content for the report to be updated to reflect those changes.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee

- (a) endorsed the revised Council Procedure Rules as set out in Appendix 1 to the report now submitted;
- (b) recommended to Council the approval of the replacement of the Council Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution;
- (c) endorsed the new Substitutes Policy as set out in Appendix 3

to the report now submitted; and

- (d) recommended to Council the approval of the Substitutes Policy for insertion into the Council's Constitution.

36. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) informing it of the approach and work undertaken on the Corporate Risk Register, including the latest heat maps relating to the corporate risks.

The Risk Manager set out the report, noting that while there had been no changes to the overall risk scoring since the last reporting period, significant work had been undertaken to strengthen resilience, regulatory compliance, fraud prevention, data protection, workforce planning and safeguarding, as well as enhancements to the risk management software.

In response to questions from the Committee around whether the Workforce Strategy was sufficient to get the Staffing Risk target priority number down from 16 to 4 and whether this was an achievable target, the Interim Corporate Director (Finance & Resources) confirmed she had been very assured that everything was on track to get to the agreed position in the timescales that had been set out. The Workforce Strategy was a robust plan with agreed actions to ensure the outcomes agreed were delivered in a timely manner. The Chief Executive had been leading on that piece of work and it was something that was discussed regularly. There was assurance from the Chief Executive because as part of the resource planning, the concern raised relating to the challenging timescales to complete the agreed actions to assure that concern had been taken into consideration. The Council needed staff being retained within the organisation. Furthermore, the concerns of staff and residents were understood.

The Head of Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer also advised that there was a Communication Strategy specifically for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), which covered dealing with staff and staff engagement in detail. There were a significant number of mechanisms in that respect, and in addition to drop-in sessions hosted by the Chief Executive there were all-staff sessions specifically around LGR.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee commented on the reports in the appendices and progress with risk management and noted the risks to the organisation and whether they are being managed in line with the Risk Management Strategy.

37. INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) presenting an update on the work of the Internal Audit

Service since the last meeting.

The Audit Manager, Dan Harris of RSM set out the report noting that good progress was continuing to be made with the 2025/26 plan, with four further reports being finalised since the previous meeting in September and three positive assurance opinions issued since that meeting.

In response to a question from the Committee around the process for sharing compliments and good practices, the Audit Manager advised that in the documents, RSM had lifted the conclusion and executive summary so a lot more detail had gone in the report that had been considered by officers regarding that, and there were a number of processes in place to pick up those compliments.

A further question was raised by the Committee regarding recent government legislation in the form of the Renters' Rights Act and how this might affect the Council. The Housing Team would provide a written answer which would be circulated to the Committee.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the report on the update on work undertaken by Internal Audit up to the end of November 2025 be received and noted.

38. INTERNAL AUDIT ACTIONS UPDATE

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) setting out the current position with respect to implementation of actions arising from Internal Audit reports.

The Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer set out the report, noting that within the currently open actions, five had been redated from their original target date, as had previously been discussed during the previous Committee meeting.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Risk Manager advised that an appendix could be introduced to include a graph to clearly display open actions against closed actions, to help give a better visual of what progress had been made.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the report on the current position regarding actions arising from internal audit reports, be received and noted.

39. 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 decisions taken at previous meetings.

Chair