

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, CAMBS, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 28 January 2026

PRESENT: Councillor M J Burke – Chair.

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

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors B S Chapman and J A Gray.

SUBSTITUTES: Councillor R Martin substituted for Councillor J A Gray.

40 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 November 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

41 Members' Interests

No declarations were received.

42 Appointment of Lead Independent Person

With the aid of a report prepared by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee were provided with an opportunity to recommend to Council the appointment to the post of Lead Independent Person as required by the Localism Act 2011.

The Elections & Democratic Services Manager set out the report and invited questions from the Committee.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Elections & Democratic Services Manager advised that the Council had previously had a Deputy Independent Person in post. Regulations required the Council to appoint a minimum of 1 Independent Person, and resources had not allowed for a recruitment process to appoint a Deputy Independent Person but it was something that could be taken forward. She confirmed that the two-year period until April 2028 was to coincide with the new Unitary Authority. Comments from the Committee were made around the logic of appointing a Deputy Independent Person who could transfer to the role of Lead Independent Person for the new Unitary Authority in 2028.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to affirm the re-appointment of Mrs Gillian Holmes to the post of Lead Independent Person for a further two-year period to 1st April 2028 without the need for further ratification in each year by the Council at its Annual Meeting.

43 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 Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer set out the report, noting that Gold Officer training had taken place since the publication of the agenda.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Risk Manager advised that the fraud, bribery and corruption risk assessment workshops had good engagement across the board from manager level to officer level. 100 risks had been documented on the Fraud Risk Register which would be reviewed and discussions with each representative service to discuss more possible controls would take place. The Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer advised that the Council had a lines of defence model which set out how to ensure the risk management approach was embedded into each tier of the organisation. The Risk Manager had recently presented to the Management Team on the concept of risk management and appetite so there was assurance this was part of the governance framework moving forward. Furthermore, the Risk Manager advised that there had been several E-learning sessions that were delivered specifically on enterprise risk management and risk appetite which had received good feedback.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer clarified that the transformation framework was akin to good project management documentation in terms of how data sets were held and how the number of projects were controlled, as opposed to being a formal framework.

The Committee raised a concern in terms of Transformation regarding the digital maturity score which it felt was not high enough to have the assurance that the risk could be reduced and sought understanding on why officers believed they were able to reduce that risk. The Committee also raised concerns in terms of Safeguarding, regarding the low uptake of the training being made available and asked when staff were asked to do this as that would impact on the level of those concerns. Furthermore, as the training was mandatory, the Committee asked what was being done to ensure this was being completed and what was being done to ensure officers who had not undertaken the mandatory training were being held accountable and were compliant. The Committee requested to see these figures at the next Committee meeting so they could see the progress made in terms of uptake in the intervening period. The Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer would take both of these matters away and ensure responses were circulated.

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.

44 Internal Audit Strategy 2026/27

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which provided an update on the key areas that were considered for internal audit activity in the years 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28 and provided it with an early opportunity to identify any potential areas for inclusion in the 2026/27 Strategy.

The Audit Manager, Dan Harris of RSM set out the report and invited the Committee to reflect on potential areas for inclusion. Members' attention was drawn to the blank Insurance Audit Area of the report, which the Audit Manager advised would be updated for the report for the March Committee meeting.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Audit Manager advised that the Risk Register was a moving piece and there were risks that may have come on to the Risk Register that might not have been reflected in the Strategy document. Discussions with officers may well bring in potential coverage in terms of Local Government Organisation (LGR). In relation to risks, he would look to the Risk Manager and other risk owners to discuss whether there were other sorts of assurance. RSM were not always the right source of assurance so there was not always a correlation to every risk on the Risk Register through to the Internal Audit Strategy. Regarding comments from the Committee around the lack of an Audit Area for Planning more broadly than Planning Applications, he would incorporate this into the discussions over the upcoming weeks with a view to updating the draft plan that would come to the March Committee meeting.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee commented on and noted the Internal Audit Strategy for 2026/27.

45 Internal Audit Progress Report

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) providing it with an update on the work of the Internal Audit Service since the last meeting and the progress against the Internal Audit Plan 2025/26 that was approved by the Committee at its 25th March 2025 meeting.

The Audit Manager, Dan Harris of RSM set out the report, noting that good progress made with the Internal Audit Plan and the Audits had run largely in line with the original agreed timing. Furthermore, he commended the general co-operation and engagement across the board and confirmed he was confident he would be able to provide a year-end opinion.

The Committee received assurance from the Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer around how seriously the Capacity Planning report was being taken and its contents would be addressed as soon as possible. Regarding the known system issue referenced in the General Ledger, the Audit Manager advised that the implementation dates for actions was 31st January and an update would come to the next Committee meeting. The Interim Corporate Director - Finance & Resources assured the Committee that all of the actions agreed had been dealt with, apart from 1 outstanding item with the finance platform TechOne. Work was ongoing with TechOne who would provide an upgrade patch to rectify this matter, and the Committee would be provided with an update at the next Committee meeting.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the report on the update on work undertaken by Internal Audit to date, be received and noted.

46 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, drawing particular attention to the visual representation of Internal Audit Actions and having that split by priority, which was requested by the Committee at its previous meeting. Officers would continue to work with RSM to increase the sophistication of reporting in order to have more detailed representation moving forward.

The Committee referenced the graph in paragraph 3.1 of the report and were of the opinion that it would be useful to include how many actions were carried forward so that the net change would be visible. The Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer noted the request and confirmed officers were continuing to improve reporting and would look to include this information. The Committee also felt that it would be useful if the Action Detail had some context as to what was being addressed or what had gone wrong, and asked if there was a way of ensuring the actions were clear as to what they were trying to resolve.

The Interim Corporate Director – Finance and Resources advised that in terms of Reference 3381, officers were still working with TechOne on a patch upgrade to rectify this. In response to a question from the Committee regarding Reference 4640 which appeared to have been resolved, she would take that away and circulate a response advising why it was still included on the list of outstanding actions.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

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

47 Auditor's Annual Report 2024-25

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) setting out the Auditor's Annual Report for 2024/25, including the commentary on the Value for Money arrangements for the Council.

The Audit Partner, Ernst & Young LLP, Claire Mellons set out the report and invited questions from the Committee.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Audit Partner, Ernst & Young LLP advised that she could not issue the certificate for closure of the Audit until the National Audit Office had completed their work on the whole of government accounts, however this would not prevent her signing off her audit opinion on the financial statements or concluding on Value for Money work. She advised that Ernst & Young LLP were on target to complete all of the planning procedures for 2024/25 which was the biggest building block in terms of the Council getting back to full assurance. There were a number of questions around the logistics of Audit Opinions in relation to Local Government Reorganisation that Ernst & Young LLP were discussing. The Firm had started to get some steer from Government where they should be focusing their directions and the intention was that over the following 3-6 months, they should be able to give the Committee more certainty on what the Council's path was going to look like. There needed to be careful thought over the coming years over the logistics of the accounting and audit work for Constituent Authorities in the context of LGR.

In response to a query from the Committee as to the overspend relating to the additional costs arising from the creation of the transformation and community health funds, the Audit Partner, LLP would respond after the meeting as to where this information had been taken from.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee commented on and noted the Auditor's Annual Report 2024/25.

48 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.

49 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

50 CyberSecurity Update

An exempt report from the Chief Digital Information Officer was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book).

Following a detailed presentation from the Chief Digital Information Officer, the Committee received responses to a number of questions which had been raised during the course of its discussions.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the exempt report and its contents, be acknowledged.

Chair