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, 16 September 2026.

PRESENT:	Councillor P J Hodgson-Jones – Chair.
	Councillors R Coogan, J A Gray, G Seeff, H Tobias, N Wells (substituted for Councillor M J Burke) and M Young.
APOLOGY:	An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor M J Burke.
SUBSTITUTES:	Councillor N Wells substituted for Councillor M J Burke.
IN ATTENDANCE:	Councillors S Claffey, L Dewey-Beckett, M Hassall and A Wood.

85. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8th July 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

86. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

87. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE PROGRESS REPORT AND FUTURE WORK

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 and the Future Work of the Committee.

The Interim Monitoring Officer outlined proposals for establishing a joint monitoring Group consisting of representatives of the Corporate Governance Committee and the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth). He advised that the purpose would be to oversee the progress of the independent review relating to the Capital and Centric projects, ensure the agreed scope was being addressed and monitor the delivery of the final report. The proposed membership of the Group was Councillors Hassall, P Hodgson-Jones, Tobias, Tomlinson, Seeff and Wood. Members were advised that the Group would not direct findings or influence conclusions. The final report would remain entirely independent.

Councillors Hassall and Wood were in attendance for the discussion of the item.

The Committee discussed the need to ensure the independence of the review process, appropriate oversight arrangements, transparency and a procurement process capable of securing genuinely independent reviewers. In response to a question from the Committee, the Chair confirmed that none of the proposed representatives had been involved in Cabinet decision-making relating to the original project, and several Members had only been elected in May 2026. It was reiterated that the Group would not conduct the investigation, it would oversee its progress and ensure its completion.

The Interim Monitoring Officer further advised that:

- the review would be independently commissioned;
- at least three quotations would be sought;
- procurement would be undertaken in accordance with Council procedures;
- the objective would be the publication of a full report in open session, without redactions, unless there were legal reasons for doing so;
- the target remained to complete the review before the end of the calendar year, subject to the procurement process and complexity of the work involved; and
- Members would not influence the final report, but the expectation was the Committee would see a final draft to ensure all questions and concerns had been addressed.

The Committee also discussed the Future Work scheduled for its upcoming meetings. Members noted that an additional meeting of the Committee may be required in December to consider the Annual Governance Statement and Statement of Accounts.

The Committee considered the proposal for establishing the joint monitoring Group. On being put to the vote, Councillors Gray, Hodgson-Jones, Seeff, Wells and Young voted in favour, and Councillors Coogan and Tobias voted against. The motion was therefore declared to be carried.

Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED

that the proposal to establish a joint monitoring Group, be agreed.

88. WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) setting out the revised Whistleblowing Policy for endorsement.

The Executive Councillor for Climate, Transformation and Workforce, Councillor Claffey and the Head of HR & OD presented the report.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Head of HR & OD advised that the Policy would be clarified that quarterly reports of whistleblowing that may have taken place would be reported to the Committee on an annual basis. Individuals would be informed if

investigations exceeded target timescales. The wording of the Policy could also be clarified regarding the evidence needing to be provided before an investigation took place, to ensure it was in line with Government guidelines. Furthermore, she would look into staff receiving training and guidance following the adoption of the Policy. The Policy had been reviewed against local authority best practice and supported by legal advice. The Committee noted that only one genuine whistleblowing case had been recorded during the previous twelve months, although some matters incorrectly described as whistleblowing had also been received.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the revised Whistleblowing Policy, be approved.

89. CHANGES TO THE CODE OF PROCUREMENT (PART 4 RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION)

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) setting out the proposed required replacement of the Council's existing Code of Procurement with a new set of Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs).

The Executive Councillor for Climate, Transformation & Workforce, Councillor Claffey and the Head of Procurement introduced the report.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Procurement Manager advised that:

- any significant changes arising during a procurement process would be communicated to all bidders to ensure fairness and transparency, with procurement timescales extended where necessary. It was also confirmed that suppliers would not be permitted to renegotiate contractual terms following award;
- procurement training would shortly be delivered to all officers involved in procurement activity where contracts exceeded £5,000, and training would also be offered to be delivered to Members;
- all contracts valued above £5,000 should be recorded on the Council's contract register and officers advised how the register was linked to financial systems to assist with monitoring expenditure against contracts;
- in response to concerns regarding repeat use of suppliers and compliance with procurement thresholds, the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer undertook to review existing arrangements and explore opportunities to strengthen oversight and reporting;
- provisions relating to contract management and post-award monitoring had been strengthened through the revised arrangements; and
- the Council's contract register was publicly accessible, providing transparency of awarded contracts.

The Committee raised concerns around the number of lower value

contracts, below £10,000, with the same supplier and how these were managed, along with the governance on spend with suppliers being directly linked to their contracts. The Interim Monitoring Officer advised he would take the matter away and report back to the Committee at a later date.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that

(1) the Committee has reviewed the CPRs, as set out at Appendix A;

(2) the changes made between the existing Code of Procurement and the new CPRs in Appendix B, be noted;

(3) that the Council be recommended to endorse the required amendments to the Constitution for the Council to remain compliant with procurement legislation;

(4) the Procurement Guide as set out at Appendix C, be approved; and

(5) the draft Procurement Outcomes - the Social Value Policy at Appendix D, be approved.

90. SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) setting out the updated Scheme of Delegation which had been reviewed and redrafted.

The Interim Monitoring Officer introduced the report, advising that the review represented a housekeeping exercise to reflect organisational changes, revised job titles and updated officer responsibilities.

Officers noted the request from the Committee that future changes to documents be accompanied by a tracked-change version to help provide clarity on amendments made, and that this practice be adopted more widely across Council reports.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to approve of the revised Scheme of Delegations as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

91. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) setting out the approach taken to improve the Council's management of risk, in particular, for work undertaken on corporate risks where the residual risk score has not yet met the target risk score. Heatmaps and a summary risk register were included as

appendices to support the Committee's oversight of the Council's current corporate risk profile.

The Risk Manager introduced the report.

In response to comments from the Committee regarding the new Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) corporate risk, the Risk Manager advised that the risk reflected uncertainty pending Government decisions regarding LGR, and recognised the potentially significant implications for services, finances, economic growth and strategic direction for Huntingdonshire.

The Committee noted that the adoption of the revised Whistleblowing Policy discussed earlier in the meeting, Minute Number 88 refers, would help reduce governance-related risks around fraud and corruption.

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.

92. LGR RISK REGISTER

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) providing an update on the approach being taken to identify, access and manage risks associated with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Heatmaps and a summary LGR risk register were included as appendices to support the Committee's oversight of the current LGR risk profile.

The Risk Manager introduced the report, advising that it had been written before the Government's recent pause announcement and that some references to programme management structures and workstreams would therefore no longer reflect the current position. Despite this, officers considered the identified risks to remain valid and capable of being reactivated once Government decisions were confirmed.

Members welcomed the work undertaken to establish a comprehensive framework and acknowledged that the register would provide a valuable basis for future risk management when the programme resumed.

In response to comments from the Committee regarding the risks relating to delayed decision-making, contract uncertainty and staffing arrangements associated with the pause, the Risk Manager advised that:

- appropriate contractual provisions had been incorporated into relevant arrangements;
- staff seconded into programme roles would return to substantive positions; and

- internal resources were being redirected to other projects pending Government announcements.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee commented on the progress the Council is making in regard to its management of risk related to Local Government Reorganisation, including the summary and heatmap reports in the appendices.

93. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) providing an update on the work of the Internal Audit Service since the last meeting and progress against the Internal Audit Plan 2026/27 that was approved by the Committee on 18th March 2026.

The Head of Internal Audit, Dan Harris of RSM introduced the report.

Members questioned how employees could operate without up-to-date job descriptions. Officers explained that whilst individuals had continued to perform their functions, documentation had not always been updated to reflect evolving responsibilities over time. Officers confirmed that comprehensive reviews had now been undertaken and systems improved to ensure job descriptions formed part of annual review processes.

The Executive Councillor for Governance & Democratic Services confirmed that regular meetings were taking place with Internal Audit and senior officers to monitor implementation of recommendations and ensure risk and governance issues remained a priority.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee commented on and noted the update on work undertaken by Internal Audit to date.

94. INTERNAL AUDIT ACTIONS UPDATE

The Committee received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the progress made in implementing management actions arising from final internal audit reports.

The Corporate Director – Finance & Resources introduced the report.

The Committee commented on the volume of actions being managed and questioned whether sufficient resources existed to deliver all improvements.
The Corporate Director – Finance & Resources advised that Heads of Service were encouraged to identify any resource implications during discussions with Internal Audit and that Corporate Leadership Team oversight and ongoing dialogue remained in place to manage

priorities appropriately.

The Committee requested officers to enhance future reporting by showing the opening number of ongoing audit actions to better illustrate movements between categories during each reporting period. Officers agreed to review the format of future reports.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the Committee commented on and noted the current position regarding actions arising from internal audit reports.

Chair