

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL held in The Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 26th June 2007.

PRESENT: Councillor C J Stephens – Chairman.
Councillors K J Churchill, P J Downes,
J A Gray and L M Simpson.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors T V Rogers and G S E Thorpe.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Winrow of RSM Robson Rhodes, the Council's external auditors.

5. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 16th May 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor P J Downes declared a personal interest in Minute No. 8 by virtue of being a Trustee of the Cambridgeshire County Council Pension Fund.

7. USE OF RESOURCES

The Panel gave consideration to the Council's Use of Resources Judgements 2006 (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). In introducing the judgements, Mr Winrow of the Council's external auditors, informed Members that the Council had consistently performed above minimum requirements against the Audit Commission's scoring system. He went on to draw their attention to the action plan annexed to the report.

RESOLVED

that the report be received and noted.

8. FINAL ACCOUNTS 2006/07

The Panel considered the draft Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2007 (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). Members' attention was drawn to a number of key aspects of the accounts and to changes to the way they were compiled.

In response to a question on the Council's return on investments, the Panel was informed that the figure in the accounts represented a particular point in time and the termination of arrangements with one

of the external fund managers.

Following a question on the cost of collecting Council Tax, the Head of Financial Services explained this was a District Council function and that other agencies for whom the Council collected precepts did not reimburse their element of these costs.

Arising from a discussion on the assumptions for Council Tax income each year, the Panel suggested that all Members should be informed of the procedure for reporting cases where they had reasonable grounds for suspecting fraudulent claims for Council Tax discounts and also for assisting those entitled to benefits to claim them.

The Panel then discussed the Council's level of reserves. The current level was regarded as substantial and it was planned to use part of them to fund services over a period of time.

Finally, after a rigorous discussion and having also addressed issues on the Council's liabilities, on an increase in earmarked reserves for Section 106 Agreements and on the meaning of "government grants deferred amortisation", it was

RESOLVED

that the draft Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2007 be approved to enable the audit to commence.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

With the aid of a report by the Internal Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel gave consideration to a revised Risk Management Strategy. Having discussed the principle underlying the "political" category of risk, it was

RESOLVED

that the revised Risk Management Strategy be approved.

10. REVIEW OF THE INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE

The Panel received and noted a report by the Director of Commerce and Technology (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal audit, which was required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2006. Having noted the external auditor's positive endorsement of the service and identified areas for improvement, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the finding to the effect that the Council's Internal Audit Service meets the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Audit Practice be noted; and
- (b) that the action plan prepared to address the areas for improvement identified also be noted.

11. COMPLAINTS

The Panel received and noted a report by the Director of Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing an analysis of the Council's internal complaints and a summary of complaints concerning the District Council which had been determined by the Local Government Ombudsman in 2006/07.

RESOLVED

that the report be received and noted.

Chairman