

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL held in Meeting Room 1, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 26 March 2008.

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

APOLOGY: An Apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor T V Rogers.

26. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th December 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

28. CHANGES TO THE CODE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

With the aid of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel gave consideration to proposed changes to the Code of Financial Management.

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to approve the amended Code of Financial Management as appended to the report now submitted.

29. ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Policy and Strategic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking the Panel's endorsement of an assurance framework and updating Members on action taken to date in respect of issues identified in the last Annual Governance Statement. Having been acquainted with details of the sources of assurance, which supported the Council's governance arrangements, and considered the half yearly review of the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan, it was

RESOLVED

(a) that the assurance framework attached at Appendix A to the report now submitted be endorsed; and

- (b) that progress made to date in the achievement of the action plan supporting the Annual Governance Statement be noted.

30. EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORTS

(Mr N Smith, the Council's Relationship Manager for the Audit Commission and Mrs L Standford and Mr P Winrow of Grant Thornton UK LLP, the Council's external auditors, were in attendance for consideration of these items.)

(a) DATA QUALITY AUDIT REPORT 2006/07

The Panel gave consideration to a report by the Head of Policy and Strategic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) in relation to the External Auditor's report on the Council's Data Quality arrangements.

In noting that the three stage approach to the review of data quality had concluded that the Council's overall management arrangements demonstrated adequate performance in 2006/07 and that an action plan had been devised in conjunction with Council Officers to focus on areas designed to achieve compliance with the next higher level of compliance, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the Data Quality Audit Report 2006/07 be noted; and
- (b) that the management action plan as set out in Appendix A to the report now submitted be endorsed.

(b) USE OF RESOURCES REPORT 2006/07

The Panel gave consideration to the Council's Use of Resources Report 2006/07 (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). In introducing the report, representatives of Grant Thornton UK LLP informed Members that the Council had consistently performed above Audit Commission's minimum requirements and in noting the action plan designed to assist the Council in achieving compliance with the next higher level within the framework, the Panel

RESOLVED

- that the Use of Resources Report 2006/07 be received and noted.

31. ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER

(Mr N Smith, the Council's Relationship Manager for the Audit Commission and Mrs L Standford and Mr P Winrow of Grant Thornton UK LLP, the Council's external auditors, were in attendance for consideration of this item.)

The Panel gave consideration to the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). In respect of the performance of the Council in 2006/07, Mr Smith informed Members that the Council's rate of improvement in priority areas compared favourably against other district councils and drew the Panel's attention to the fact that the Council had consistently exceeded the Audit Commission's criteria for "performing well".

In considering the assessed performance of the Council in priority areas and the comparisons made with other Councils, the Panel exchanged views with Mr Smith about the value of some Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's). Having noted the overall assessment and key issues arising from the account, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter be received and noted.

32. RISK REGISTER UPDATE

With the aid of a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was appended an extract of the high "red" risks taken from the Risk Register, the Panel was acquainted with the basis on which the Register had been compiled and the process by which those risks identified had been reviewed. In noting that future update reports would only include details of new or changed entries to the Register, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report now submitted and the arrangements introduced for managing the risks identified on the Risk Register be noted.

33. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE : INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2008

Further to Minute No. 22 the Panel received a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was appended a proposed Internal Audit and Assurance Plan for the fourth months period commencing 01/04/08.

RESOLVED

that the Audit and Assurance Plan be approved.

34. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE: INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT

The Panel received and noted a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the progress made to date in respect of the delivery of the 2007/08 Annual Audit Plan and the performance standards achieved.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report now submitted be noted.

35. WHISTLEBLOWING: ANNUAL REVIEW OF POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Panel received and noted a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the outcome of the annual review of the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.

RESOLVED

that no changes be made to the current policy and procedure on Whistleblowing.

36. TRAVEL PLAN

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing the conclusions reached by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) and Cabinet following a review of the Council's Travel Plan and those proposals impinging on Members' Allowances which would require changes to the Council's Constitution. Having dismissed a proposal to vary the Allowances recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet, it was

RESOLVED

that full Council be invited to approve recommendations (a) – (d) in the report by the Travel Plan Working Group appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for Service Support.

Chairman