

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL held in the CIVIC SUITE 0.1A, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 8 December 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor T D Sanderson – Chairman.  
Councillors M G Baker, P L E Bucknell,  
S J Criswell and T V Rogers.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors K J Churchill and C M Saunderson.

### **23. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **24. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No declarations were received.

### **25. EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT: ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2009/10**

*(Mrs L Sanford of Grant Thornton UK LLP, the Council's external auditors, was in attendance for consideration of this item.)*

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 the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter for 2009/10. Having acquainted the Panel with the performance of the Council in 2009/10, Members' attention was drawn to the key areas for action by the Council over the 2010/11 financial year, in respect of which it was noted that work had already started in terms of identifying potential savings and that a report will be considered at the next Council meeting on the reorganisation of its senior management structure.

In noting that the Council's newly appointed external auditor's had commenced their duties, the Chairman, on behalf of the Council, thanked Grant Thornton UK LLP for their contributions over the previous 5 years. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2009/10 be received and noted.

### **26. CALCULATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE 2011/12**

In accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as

amended), the Panel was acquainted with a report by the Head of Customer Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) setting out the general principles for the calculation of the tax base, which was based on the number of Band D equivalent properties within the District.

#### RESOLVED

- (a) that the report by the Head of Customer Services regarding the calculation of the District Council's tax base for the year 2011/12 be approved; and
- (b) that in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended), the amount calculated by Huntingdonshire District Council as the net tax base for the whole District for the year 2011/12 be 59,460 and shall be as listed below for each Parish of the District:

|                            |      |
|----------------------------|------|
| Abbotsley                  | 245  |
| Abbots Ripton              | 130  |
| Alconbury                  | 555  |
| Alconbury Weston           | 276  |
| Alwalton                   | 125  |
| Barham & Woolley           | 25   |
| Bluntisham                 | 744  |
| Brampton                   | 1805 |
| Brington & Molesworth      | 140  |
| Broughton                  | 85   |
| Buckden                    | 1160 |
| Buckworth                  | 50   |
| Bury                       | 607  |
| Bythorn & Keyston          | 142  |
| Catworth                   | 141  |
| Chesterton                 | 58   |
| Colne                      | 350  |
| Conington                  | 73   |
| Covington                  | 41   |
| Denton & Caldecote         | 25   |
| Diddington                 | 28   |
| Earith                     | 580  |
| Easton                     | 75   |
| Ellington                  | 232  |
| Elton                      | 294  |
| Farcet                     | 580  |
| Fenstanton                 | 1170 |
| Folksworth & Washingley    | 345  |
| Glatton                    | 134  |
| Godmanchester              | 2430 |
| Grafham                    | 237  |
| Great & Little Gidding     | 122  |
| Great Gransden             | 455  |
| Great Paxton               | 370  |
| Great Staughton            | 325  |
| Haddon                     | 25   |
| Hail Weston                | 240  |
| Hamerton & Steeple Gidding | 52   |

|                              |              |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| Hemingford Abbots            | 330          |
| Hemingford Grey              | 1155         |
| Hilton                       | 450          |
| Holme                        | 238          |
| Holywell-cum-Needingworth    | 980          |
| Houghton & Wyton             | 810          |
| Huntingdon                   | 7395         |
| Kimbolton & Stonely          | 595          |
| Kings Ripton                 | 83           |
| Leighton Bromswold           | 84           |
| Little Paxton                | 1280         |
| Morborne                     | 11           |
| Offord Cluny & Offord D'Arcy | 505          |
| Old Hurst                    | 96           |
| Old Weston                   | 85           |
| Perry                        | 262          |
| Pidley-cum-Fenton            | 150          |
| Ramsey                       | 2900         |
| St Ives                      | 5795         |
| St Neots                     | 10565        |
| Sawtry                       | 1730         |
| Sibson-cum-Stibbington       | 210          |
| Somersham                    | 1385         |
| Southoe & Midloe             | 160          |
| Spaldwick                    | 230          |
| Stilton                      | 785          |
| Stow Longa                   | 65           |
| The Stukeleys                | 418          |
| Tilbrook                     | 110          |
| Toseland                     | 37           |
| Upton & Coppingford          | 85           |
| Upwood & The Raveleys        | 425          |
| Warboys                      | 1370         |
| Waresley-cum-Tetworth        | 146          |
| Water Newton                 | 42           |
| Winwick                      | 38           |
| Wistow                       | 215          |
| Woodhurst                    | 152          |
| Woodwalton                   | 85           |
| Wyton-on-the-Hill            | 415          |
| Yaxley                       | 2975         |
| Yelling                      | <u>142</u>   |
|                              | <u>59460</u> |

## 27. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

With the aid of a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel's attention was drawn to proposed minor textual amendments to the Risk Management Strategy. In noting that the changes proposed intended to provide further clarification to Officers on the options available to manage residual risks identified by the Council, it was

RESOLVED

that the changes proposed in paragraph 1.1 of the report now submitted be endorsed by the Panel.

**28. REVIEW OF HOUSING BENEFIT FRAUD INVESTIGATION ACTIVITY AND THE COUNCIL'S WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

Consideration was given to a joint report by the Head of Customer Services and Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the activity of the Benefits Fraud Investigation Team over the previous three years and detailing the outcome of the annual review of the Whistleblowing Policy and the type and number of whistleblowing matters reported.

In noting the activity undertaken by the Housing Benefit Fraud Investigation Team over the 2007 to 2010 period, the Panel received details of new work areas undertaken by the Team which included the collection of debts arising from benefit overpayments. In so doing, Members were encouraged to note the successes achieved to date.

With regard to the review of the Whistleblowing Policy and Guidance, the Panel noted that 19 incidents had been received through the various Whistleblowing channels.

**RESOLVED**

- (a) that the work undertaken in respect of benefit fraud be noted; and
- (b) that the annual review of the Whistleblowing policy and procedure has been undertaken and that no changes be required to the current policy.

**29. REVIEW OF THE ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY**

By means of a report by the Audit & Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel was acquainted with the outcome of the annual review of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy. In noting that the review had taken into account the implications for the Council of the Bribery Act 2010, the Panel were advised that minor changes to the Strategy, Employees Code of Conduct and Code of Financial Management were required to take into account the provisions of the Act. Given that the alterations to the latter two Codes would require changes to be made to the Council's Constitution, the proposed amendments will be managed as part of the reviews of the Employees Code of Conduct and of the Council's Constitution which will be considered by the Panel in the spring cycle of meetings. Having concurred with a suggestion for a review of services likely to be affected by bribery to be undertaken by the Council, it was

**RESOLVED**

- (a) that Heads of Service be requested to review and identify service areas that may be susceptible to bribery and introduce controls to minimise the opportunity for offences;
- (b) that the proposed amendments to paragraph 14.8 of the Employees Code of Conduct as highlighted in paragraph

2.7 of the report now submitted be endorsed in principle;

- (c) that the proposed amendments to the Code of Financial Management to include details of the maximum limit of £1,000 for the receipt of cash payments be endorsed in principle; and
- (d) that the changes proposed to the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy as highlighted in Annex A to the report now submitted be endorsed.

Chairman