

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CORPORATE GOVERNANCE GROUP MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2006
(9.00 AM - 12.30 PM)**

Present: P Haywood (Joint Chief Executive) (Chairman) J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), J Akerman (Chief Internal Auditor), C O'Boyle (Head of Legal, Administration and Estates) and R Palmer (Head of Finance) I Willett

**Apologies for
Absence:**

Place: P. Haywood's Office, Civic Offices, Epping

51. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 7 JUNE 2006

Agreed.

52. MATTERS ARISING

No items for report.

53. AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Draft report for Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee agreed subject to the following points:

(a) clarify "independence" of the new Audit and Governance Committee from the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committee;

(b) amend paragraph 17 to suggest that membership of the Audit and Governance Committee should be restricted to those who do not serve on the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (including the Standing Panel on Finance but excluding other Overview and Scrutiny Panels);

(c) include the report reference to the need to change the terms of reference of the Finance and Performance Management and include a statement showing the remaining tasks were an Audit and Governance Committee to be established; and

(d) include clarification in the text of the report about the respective roles of the Finance and Performance Management Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee in relation to risk management;

Agreed that a draft of this report be supplied to the Council's Relationship Manager in the Audit Commission for information and comment.

Agreed that the report should be presented so that members are able to shape the arrangements agreed in the manner which they feel appropriate.

ACTION:

J Akerman/I Willett to finalise report.

54. BUSINESS AND INTERNAL CONTROL ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Draft report agreed subject to changes to the lists of protocols and guidance listed and to responsibility for reviewing codes, protocols, etc. being included in the remit of the Audit and Governance Committee.

ACTION:

J Akerman to finalise report.

55. ANNUAL REVIEWS OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS AND DELEGATED AUTHORITIES

Agreed that the Working Party which had reviewed the contract standing orders be reconvened to undertake a review of financial regulations, contract standing orders and delegated authorities.

Agreed that I Willett should chair the Group.

Agreed that contract standing orders be pursued by I Willett/C O'Boyle, financial regulations by R Palmer and J Akerman and delegation to officers by I Willett.

Agreed the aspects of contract procedures relating to:

- (a) the financial limit for portfolio holder decisions on contracts; and
- (b) implications of acceptance of tenders based on schedules of rates (e.g. rewiring contract).

ACTION:

I Willett to convene Group.

56. NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE 2006

J Akerman tabled a results summary and reported that there had been three prosecutions involving this Council with a net recovery of £33,000.

Noted that in respect of the National Fraud Initiative for 2006 matches were being prepared by ICT to cover payroll, housing benefits, rents and creditors (mandatory requirements) and that work was being undertaken to look at licensing, insurance and concessionary travel.

Agreed that the Council should continue to support the National Fraud Initiative.

ACTION:

R Palmer/J Akerman to pursue 2006 National Fraud Initiative matches and clarify possibilities in relation to licensing, insurance and concessionary travel.

57. PLANNING PROTOCOL

Noted that I Willett was preparing a report for the Standards Committee regarding changes to the planning protocol to deal with planning applications by Councillors and he was also advising J Preston regarding the terms of revised delegated authorities for the Area Plans Sub-Committees in those cases.

ACTION:

I Willett to pursue.

58. STANDARDS COMMITTEE

(a) Standards Committee Adjudication – Councillor Mrs D Collins

C O'Boyle reported on the outcome of this adjudication.

(b) Outstanding Complaints

Noted that one complaint had been dismissed by the Standards Board for England and would not be pursued any further.

Noted that I Willett was investigating two cases and was at the draft report stage.

(c) Investigations Workload

Noted that at the last meeting of the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee some concern had been expressed about discussion in the Corporate Governance Group of individual cases, which are the subject of investigation.

Agreed that the Corporate Governance Group's prime role should be to monitor workload in respect of these investigations, to be advised of the outcomes of adjudications in terms of corporate governance and operational issues.

Agreed that the Corporate Governance Group should continue to avoid discussion on the details of cases which were under investigation whether by the Standards Board for England or by the Monitoring Officer.

Noted that the workload required in preparing comprehensive investigation reports on these cases was considerable and increasing.

59. OFFICER'S CODE OF CONDUCT

Noted that T Tidey had published proposals for dealing with the registration of interests required under the Code of Conduct for Officers which is due to be considered by the Council at the end of September.

Agreed that the Corporate Governance Group should refer their observations to T Tidey direct.

ACTION:

T Tidey to pursue.

60. REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS - ESSEX MENTAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP AND ESSEX SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD

Agreed that the proposal for a North Essex District Council representative on the Mental Health Partnership should be referred to the next Council meeting with prior consultation with Group Leaders in support of the one nomination, which had been notified.

Agreed that in relation to the Safeguarding Children's Board a report be prepared for the Cabinet at a future meeting to outline the proposal for this Council to be affiliated to the Board and the possible financial implications in the future of so doing.

Agreed that the Council's protocol on external organisation representatives needed to be amended to take account of representatives who were appointed by more than one District Council.

Agreed that as the Mental Health Partnership was likely to be discussed at the Essex Chief Executive's meeting in the near future, there should be clarity in the arrangements and that the objectives should be to secure and agree nomination at the Essex Local Government Association, with Epping Forest District Council having clearly supported a named nominee.

61. DATE FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Agreed that the next meeting will be held on 25 October 2006 at 9.00 a.m. in P Haywood's office.

Agreed that the following meeting should be on 20 December 2006 at 9.00 a.m.

Agreed that forward dates for 2007 be agreed on the same timetable (i.e. quarterly meetings on the same day as Management Board).