

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

**WEDNESDAY, 3 OCTOBER 2007
(9.00 - 11.30 AM)**

Present: P Haywood (Chief Executive) (Chairman) C O'Boyle (Director of Corporate Support Services), R Palmer (Director of Finance and ICT), D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), J Akerman (Chief Internal Auditor), I Willett (Assistant to the Chief Executive) and V Evans (Assistant Head of ICT)

**Apologies for
Absence:**

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

14. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 12.9.07

Agreed.

15. MATTERS ARISING

(a) Business and Governance Assurance Framework (Minute 9(b)(i))

Noted that the training course for members of the Audit and Governance Committee had now been held and proved successful.

(b) Business Directory - Update (Minute 10)

Noted that following the lack of response from the Complainant's Solicitor regarding the offer of £500 compensation, the offer had been withdrawn at the expiration of three weeks from 25 September 2007.

(c) Langston Road, Loughton - T11 Site

Noted that the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee had been seeking assurances that the Audit Report on this sale would be submitted to the next meeting of his Committee.

Noted that J Akerman had given the appropriate assurance.

(d) Standards Committee - Independent Member (Minute 11(f))

Noted that one of the independent member of the Standards Committee had now been interviewed for a post within the Council.

ACTION:

I Willett to monitor the position.

16. NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE - ELECTORAL REGISTER/COUNCIL TAX CROSS MATCHING OF DATABASES

Noted that the Audit Commission, as part of the National Fraud Initiative was seeking data on Council Tax payers by 26 October 2007 and on the revised electoral register in December 2007 for the purposes of cross matching for anti-fraud purposes.

Noted that a debate had been proceeding between various local authorities, the Audit Commission, the Information Commissioner, the Electoral Administrators Association on whether there was sufficient statutory authority for the Audit Commission to require the submission of electoral register information pursuant to their own statutory roles.

Noted that a meeting of the Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officer (and Electoral Registration Officer), Chief Financial Officer, Chief Internal Auditor and G Lunnun had been held in order to review the arguments and risks associated with the release of Council Tax and Electoral Register data for cross matching purposes.

Noted that the consensus of opinion was that the evidence of a statutory link between the power of the Electoral Registration Officer to release data on the register to the Audit Commission was insufficiently clear to warrant potential risk of challenge from an aggrieved elector.

Noted that fair data processing procedures had not been instituted in respect of notifying all Council Tax payers of the availability of their data to the Audit Commission for anti-fraud purposes but this was regarded as a secondary issue to the basic legal point.

Noted that the consensus of opinion among the Statutory Officers that the risk of release of the electoral register data was too great unless a more robust legal authority could be found.

Agreed that the CGG should record its support for the stance taken by the Statutory Officers.

Agreed that the Audit Commission should be advised as follows:

- (a) that the Council remains committed to anti-fraud procedures and the NFI;
- (b) that because of the debate about the legality of releasing electoral registration information, the Council would support the view of the Monitoring Officer, Electoral Registration Officer and the Chief Financial Officer that the data could not be released for 2007/08.

Agreed that the Finance and Performance Management Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee be advised of the decision of the Statutory Officers and drawing attention to the possible effect on the Council's KLOE score of not supplying the data.

ACTION:

- (1) **J Akerman to draft letter to the Audit Commission.**
- (2) **I Willett to draft report for the Audit and Governance Committee and the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee on the background.**

17. CIPFA - "GOOD GOVERNANCE TRAINING COURSE"

Agreed that J Akerman should attend this course on behalf of the Council.

18. WORKS UNIT - REVIEW OF STOCKTAKING PROCEDURES

Agreed that in accordance with the terms of reference of the Audit and Governance Committee, the Chief Works Officer was required to attend the meeting at which this matter was discussed.

ACTION:

M Merrick to note.

19. AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS 2006/07 - STATUTORY NOTICE

Noted that formal notice had been received from the Audit Commission that the Council's Statutory Statement of Accounts for 2006/07 had been signed off without qualification.

Agreed that the requisite Public Notice be now prepared for the local press.

ACTION:

G Lunnun to draft Public Notice.

20. DATE FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

24 October 2007 at 9.00 a.m. in the Chief Executive's Office.

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