

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee held on
Friday, 14 December 2012 at 9.00 a.m.

PRESENT:	Councillor Francis Burkitt – Chairman Councillor David McCraith – Vice-Chairman	
Councillors:	Richard Barrett Douglas de Lacey Peter Topping	Mark Hersom Ted Ridgway Watt John Williams
Officers:	Patrick Adams Alex Colyer John Garnham Fiona McMillan	Senior Democratic Services Officer Executive Director, Corporate Services Head of Finance, Policy & Performance Legal & Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer
External:	Daniel Harris Suzanne Lane Neil Gibson Mark Hodgson	RSM Tenon RSM Tenon Ernst & Young Ernst & Young

66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

67. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

68. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Dan Harris of RSM Tenon presented this Internal Audit Progress Report which summarised the audits carried out so far during 2012/13.

Repairs – Partnership Arrangements

The Executive Director and Dan Harris explained that Internal Audit had revealed deficiencies in the compiling of management information with regard to repairs, but that there was no evidence to suggest that the actual service offered to the Council's tenants had declined. Councillor Richard Barrett, a member of the Direct Labour Organisation Board, provided reassurance as to the latter point.

Members of the Committee expressed concern that without accurate key performance indicators in this area it would be difficult to confirm the level of service being provided.

It was noted that Internal Audit would be carrying out a follow-up report to review whether the recommendations, all of which had been accepted by officers, had been implemented. It was agreed that the date of this review should be brought forward from March to the end of February and the Committee would be informed of its findings at its next meeting.

The Executive Director explained that Internal Audit reports were instigated by the Council's managers to investigate potential areas of concern. These reports were a management tool and as such were usually not widely circulated. However, as an exception to this general practice:

- Reports that directly affected Members, such as the review of Member Development, had been sent to councillors; and
- It was agreed that, due to its obvious relevance, the full report of the forthcoming review of Governance would be tabled as an agenda item at the next following meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee, together with officer's comments on any recommendations.

The Committee

NOTED The Internal Audit Progress Report.

69. EXTERNAL AUDIT: ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2011-12 AND CERTIFICATION OF CLAIMS REPORT

It was noted that the Audit Commission was no longer responsible for auditing the Council, so the Executive Director presented

- The Annual Audit Letter, which summarised the 2011/12 audit of the District Council by the Audit Commission; and
- The Certification of Claims Report, which summarised the claims and returns made by the Council to central government and other grant-paying bodies.

Mark Hodgson of Ernst and Young was welcomed to his first meeting. It was noted that Mark was also the external auditor for Cambridge City and covered Hertfordshire. He lived locally and for logistical reasons he had replaced Paul King who was based in Sussex.

The Committee

NOTED The Annual Audit Letter 2011/12 and the Certification of Claims report.

70. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA) - QUARTERLY UPDATE

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented this report which:

- Updated the Committee on the new requirement for authorisations to be obtained from the Magistrates Court; and
- The use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 in the last quarter.

It was noted that:

- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 meant that the Council could only use direct surveillance authorised under RIPA if approved by a Magistrate and if the offence that was suspected carried a potential sentence of imprisonment of six months or more (the serious crime test), or related to the underage sale of alcohol or tobacco.
- Officers assured Members of the Committee that they had, and would only, apply to use RIPA powers if they had clear, direct, demonstrable, valid and defensible suspicions that such an offence was being carried out.
- The Council had used the RIPA twice in the quarter October to December 2012 in relation to fly-tipping and benefit fraud.

It was understood that the Council was using the RIPA powers responsibly and the Committee **NOTED** the report.

71. MATTERS OF TOPICAL INTEREST**Year-end reports**

The Chairman suggested that the year-end reports and statements should be reduced in length, reduced in number and/or amalgamated. Members of the Committee made the following points:

- Shorter reports would free up officer time.
- If shorter reports were poorly written, there was a risk that they might be less informative and so might result in more questions from anyone who read them.
- The Plain English Accounts had been commended by External Audit at an earlier meeting.

The Executive Director said that he had requested that the Legal and Democratic Services Manager and the internal auditors consider the format and content of the Annual Governance Statement and submit a report on rationalising or reducing all reports at the next meeting.

Head of Finance, Policy and Performance

John Garnham was welcomed to his first meeting following his appointment as the Council's new Head of Finance, Policy and Performance.

Additional authorised signatory

The Committee noted that the Executive Director Corporate Services intended to delegate authority to Graham Smith (Management Accountant) to act as an authorised person under the Council's bank mandate in accordance with Financial Regulations. This decision was to be taken in consultation with the Chairman. The Chairman informed Members he intended to agree with this decision and no Member objected.

72. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee **NOTED** that its next meeting would be held on 22 March 2013 at 9am.

The Meeting ended at 9.50 a.m.
