

## WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on Thursday 20 September 2012 commencing at 6.30 pm.

- Present:**
- Councillor Sue Rawlins (Chairman)
- Councillor Owen Bierley  
Councillor Jackie Brockway  
Councillor Malcolm Leaning  
Councillor Jessie Milne  
Councillor William Parry  
Councillor Di Rodgers
- Alison Adams (Independent Co-opted Member)  
Steve Wallace (Independent Co-opted Member)
- In Attendance:**
- Mark Sturgess                      Director of Regeneration and Planning  
Alex Reeks                          Assistant Chief Executive  
Russell Stone                        Section 151 Officer and Financial Services Manager  
Alan Robinson                        Head of Central Services  
Carol deHaney                        Senior Corporate Governance Officer  
Katie Coughlan                        Governance and Civic Officer
- Also in attendance :**
- Sharon Bradbury                      District Auditor (Audit Commission)  
Tony Crawley                          District Auditor (Audit Commission)  
Lucy Pledge                            Internal Audit (Lincolnshire County Council)  
Rachel Abbott                          Internal Audit (Lincolnshire County Council)
- Also Present :**
- Councillor Chris Darcel  
Councillor Geoff Wiseman
- Apologies:**
- Councillor Anne Welburn (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
- Membership:**
- Councillor Owen Bierley substituting for Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan  
Councillor Jessie Milne substituting for Councillor Anne Welburn

## **19 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

## **20 MINUTES**

Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee – 7 June 2012

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on 7 June 2012 be approved and signed as a correct record.

## **21 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE (GA.12 12/13)**

Members gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule which set out the current position of all previously agreed actions as at 30 May 2012.

**RESOLVED** that progress on the Matters Arising schedule as set out in report GA.12 12/13 be received and noted.

## **22 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No Declarations of Interest were made.

## **23 PRESENTATION / VERBAL ITEM - FUTURE USE OF SHAREPOINT WITHIN THE ORGANISATION AND ANY FURTHER PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN IMPLEMENTING THE AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO PROJECT MANAGEMENT.**

The Director of Regeneration and Planning, and the Assistant Chief Executive addressed the Committee and outlined how Sharepoint was currently being used within the organisation, the initial problems which had been encountered, how these had been overcome / addressed and the future intentions to allow Members access to such internal systems, by way of developing a bespoke extranet for their use.

Members requested that they be provided with, outside of the meeting, details of the current financial cost to date of developing, implementing, refining and using the Sharepoint system within the Authority.

It was suggested that Members be provided with a demonstration of Sharepoint and /or the extranet currently being developed.

#### **24 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2012/13 – MAY TO AUGUST PROGRESS REPORT (GA.13 12/13)**

Members considered the Report which gave them an update of progress against the annual programme agreed by Audit Committee on 12 March 2012.

Members made reference to the publication referred to on page 5 of the report “CIPFA / SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government – A Framework and Guidance” and indicated they would welcome a report summarising the outcome of the consultation at a future meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted.

#### **25 TO AGREE TO VARY THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA**

The Chairman indicated her intention to vary the order of business. It was proposed that Paper H (Statement of Accounts) be taken prior to Paper C (2011/12 Annual Governance Report) in view of them being directly linked.

Having been proposed and seconded it was:

**RESOLVED** that the order of business be varied as detailed above.

#### **26 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS (GA.19 12/13) AND 2011/12 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT (GA.14 12/13)**

The Financial Services Manager introduced the report and appendices which presented the Statement of Accounts 2011/12 for scrutiny, approval and adoption. Alongside which, consideration was also given to External Audit’s Annual Governance Report and the contents thereof.

Members asked a number of pertinent questions, particularly around the underspends in Member Training, and clarification regarding what the contributions to Parish Councils related to, which were responded to accordingly. In respect of the former, it was noted that unspent monies would be returned to general funds.

Members commented on the level of reserves, and voiced some concern that this may affect the level of grant settlement the Authority would receive from Central Government later on in the year. In responding, the Financial Services Manager and External Auditor acknowledged that it was important to have a plan as to how it was intended to spend any reserves in order to avoid potentially affecting any grant settlement offered, and Members were provided with details of future plans identified within the Capital Programme and the approach being adopted going forward. However, the Financial Services Manager went on to further explain the reasons for the level of reserves, highlighting and summarising some of the big challenges facing Local

Government over the next 12 months, and the uncertainty these posed, for example , Universal Credit and Changes to the Benefits System, the costs of which were still unknown.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (a) having reviewed the Statement of Accounts it was confirmed that there were no concerns arising from the Financial Statements that needed to be brought to the attention of the Council;
- (b) the Statement of Accounts for 2010/11 be approved;
- (c) the Section 151 Officer and the Chair of the Committee certify the letter of representation to the District Auditor on completion of the audit; and
- (d) the contents of the External Auditors Annual Governance report be received and noted.

**27 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND ACTION PLAN (GA.15 12/13)**

Consideration was given to a report which presented the Annual Governance Statement for 2011/12 and the associated action plan to address those governance issues identified.

Arising from the debate, Members requested an update outside of the meeting, setting out the progress achieved in terms of Member Development and the number of 1-2-1s / appraisals which had now been completed.

**RESOLVED** that the Annual Governance Statement and action plan be approved.

**28 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK (COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS) (GA.16 12/13)**

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager presented the annual report on the summary of Complaints made to the Council in 2010/11. The details given in the report were based on feedback received in previous meetings. The trends shown on the graph indicated little change on previous reports, with most of the complaints being regarding waste collection, but Members agreed that given the instances of service provision the statistics were relatively low.

**RESOLVED** that the 2011/2012 results be noted.

## **29 SUMMARY OF WHISTLEBLOWING 11/12 (GA.17 12/13)**

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager presented the annual report on the summary of Whistle Blowing in 2010/11, and noted that there were no instances to report. Assurance was given that there was a general awareness of the process.

**RESOLVED** that the 2011/2012 results be noted.

## **30 SUMMARY OF BENEFIT FRAUD 11/12 (GA.18 12/13)**

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager introduced the annual report summarising the number, type and results of fraud investigations made to the Council during 2010/11.

**RESOLVED** that the 2011/2012 results be noted.

## **31 REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION (GA.20 12/13)**

Consideration was given to a report which recommended a number of house keeping changes to the Constitution, for subsequent approval and adoption by Full Council, in light of the recent organising for delivery exercise.

**RESOLVED** that the Governance and Audit Committee recommend Council to approve amendments to the Council's Constitution as detailed in Appendix 1 and that these changes come into immediate effect.

## **32 USE AND ENGAGEMENT OF TEMPORARY STAFF AND CONSULTANTS (GA.21 12/13)**

Consideration was given to a report which sought to update Members on the guidance that had been issued on the use and engagement of temporary staff and consultants, and to report on the expenditure on consultancy services and temporary staff during 2011/12.

**RESOLVED** that: -

- (a) Members note the contents of the report; and
- (b) a similar report be submitted to the Committee in a year's time and thus included within the Committee's Workplan.

## **33 WORK PLAN (GA.22 12/13)**

Governance and Audit Committee – 20 September 2012.

Members considered their work plan for meetings during the 2012/13 Civic Year.

**RESOLVED** that the work plan as at 12 September 2012 be noted and the additional items raised through the course of the debate be incorporated thereto.

The meeting concluded at 9.32 pm.

Chairman