

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a Special Meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on Thursday 27 February 2014, commencing at 6.45 pm

Present:

Councillor Sue Rawlins (Chairman)
Councillor Giles McNeill (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Gillian Bardsley
Councillor Ken Bridger
Councillor Jackie Brockway
Councillor David Dobbie
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Anne Welburn
Councillor Geoff Wiseman

Alison Adams (Independent Co-opted Member)

In Attendance:

Jeanette McGarry	Interim Director
Mark Sturgess	Chief Operating Officer
Russell Stone	Section 151 Officer and Financial Services Manager
Alan Robinson	Head of Central Support and Monitoring Officer
Emma Redwood	Team Manager –
James O’Shaughnessy	Team Manager
Katie Coughlan	Governance and Civic Officer

Also in attendance :

Lucy Pledge	Internal Audit (Lincolnshire County Council)
Lisa McKenzie	Internal Audit (Lincolnshire County Council)
Tony Crawley	External Audit (KPMG)

Also Present :

Councillor Jeff Summers
Councillor Nigel Bowler
Councillor Chris Day
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan

Apologies:

Councillor Malcolm Leaning
Councillor Di Rodgers

62 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised that she had earlier in the day received notification from Mr Steven Wallace, the Committee's other independent member, of his intention to resign from his post with immediate effect due to family commitments.

The Committee joined the Chairman in thanking him for all his hard work, dedication and commitment and wished him well for the future.

The Committee sought indication as to whether the post would be advertised, and whilst there was no legal requirement to have a second independent member, Officers would be giving consideration to matter over the coming weeks. The Monitoring Officer indicated he would seek committee's view by e-mail.

63 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

64 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

65 PRESENTATION ITEM – IMPROVING CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Committee received a presentation in support of Paper A (Corporate Governance Smart Action Plan – Progress Update), during which Members were reminded of the background to the Action Plan and circumstances in which it had arisen. A full review had been commissioned and had been undertaken using the 7 key CIPFA areas for good governance. As a result 10 key projects had been identified, namely: -

- Political Leadership
- Project Management Methodology
- Risk Registers
- Officer Code of Conduct
- ACoPS
- Constitution Review
- Member Development
- Performance Management
- Organisational Development Plan
- Investment Decisions

In turn, each project lead presented their project plans, providing information on the key activities contained therein, details of the outcomes and objectives,

the key project milestones, and provided examples as to how this was making a real difference “on the ground”.

A lengthy and detailed question and answer session followed, during which the Committee asked numerous questions in order to seek assurance.

Whilst Members welcomed the level of detail contained within the project plans, and this provided them with a level of assurance that work was being undertaken and future plans were in place, there was concern that the Committee needed further time to examine each in detail in order to be able to ask more probing questions.

In response the Lead Officer suggested that Members attend a specific “Workshop Day” for this purpose, which was welcomed by the Committee.

Whilst the Committee were accepting that progress was being made, some were of the view that there was still progress to be made particularly around Political Leadership and the ways in which “non-group” members were kept informed.

In light of the increased use being made of Minerva, the Committee further indicated that they would welcome some all Member training on using and navigating the site. Indication was also sought as to the timescale in which the project plans would be made available on Minerva, as this would help the Committee to track progress “real-time”.

There were concerns that some of the success measures were not SMART and thus it would be difficult to prove the projects had been effective. Members also challenged how the work would be embedded throughout the organisation.

By way of reassurance it was stressed that the projects were being monitored on a regular basis through internal Boards, CMT and internal audit.

Following comments made by the External Auditor, Members accepted that, with regard to the Corporate Improvement Plans that had been submitted to the meeting, whilst the systems would be monitored regularly by the Committee, it would not be their role to drill down into the detail of projects on a regular basis.

66 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE SMART ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS UPDATE (GA.45 13/14)

Members gave consideration to a report which presented the Corporate Governance programme scope and associated project plans, along with progress and delivery in order that Members could challenge and seek assurance that the direction of travel was positive and was meeting the agreed objectives.

Arising from the comments made during the question and answer session following the above presentation it was: -

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) it be accepted that progress has been made to date and the direction of travel is positive; and
- (b) in order to seek further assurance a workshop be convened in order to:
 - (i) consider each of the project plans in more depth;
 - (ii) consider the committees future work plan; and
 - (iii) how the committee moves forward in the future.

67 ELSWITHA SMART ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS UPDATE (GA.46 13/14)

Consideration was given to a report which presented the work of the Challenge and Improvement Committee working Group around the Elswitha Quarter SMART Action Plan as well as progress around the other actions set out in recommendation 2 of the report to the Special Governance and Audit Committee held on 22 October 2013.

The Committee received a short presentation from Councillor Bowler, who had chaired the working group, in support of the report, during which he outlined the process the working group had undertaken and the next steps going forward.

In the ensuing debate, Members challenged the status of action number 20/140 as completed and considered there was still some work to undertake before it could be deemed that a comprehensive framework for disseminating information to members has been put in place. On reflection Officers were in agreement, and undertook to change this item to an amber status and took the opportunity to outline some of the ideas to aide communication which were being developed.

Referring to the attached evidence guidance notes the Committee indicated they would welcome the opportunity to review the Commercial Board's Terms of Reference and suggested that this be included as part of the workshop referred to in the earlier item.

RESOLVED that

- (a) having been considered by the Committee, the SMART action plan as set out at the appendix of the report, be approved as meeting the requirements of recommendation 2 of the report of the 22 October 2013;

- (b) the SMART action plan be considered on a quarterly basis for the next 12 months or until such a time as the Committee considers the actions set out in its resolution of 22nd October 2013 are completed; and
- (c) the guidance notes set out in the appendix be noted as evidence that the actions in the SMART action plan are being addressed.

Note: Councillor David Dobbie and Roger Patterson declared a non-pecuniary interest in the above item as they had been on the working group.

68 MEMBER TRAINING – PROJECT MANAGEMENT METHODOLOGY (GA.47 13/14)

Members gave consideration to a report which detailed plans to add project management training to the Member Development plan which had been agreed in November.

RESOLVED that the addition of project management training to the member development plan be approved.

The meeting concluded at 9.28pm.

Chairman