

MINUTES of a meeting of the GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE held in the MILLENNIUM CHAMBER, MANOR HOUSE, CHURCH STREET, LITTLEHAMPTON on TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2015 at 6.30PM

Present: Cllrs Northeast (Chair) and Squires.
Cllr Chester substituted for Cllr Warren QVRM and
Cllr Buckland substituted for Cllr Purchase.

2015/2016

12. EVACUATION PROCEDURES

The evacuation procedures were noted.

13. FILMING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS, USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND MOBILE PHONES

The procedures were noted.

14. APOLOGIES

There were apologies from Councillors Blanchard-Cooper, Purchase and Warren QVRM.

15. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Members and Officers were reminded to make any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or personal and/or prejudicial interests that they might have in relation to items on the Agenda. There were none.

16. MINUTES

It was noted that Councillors Squires was incorrectly recorded as present. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

Subject to the correction of this error, the minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2015 (previously circulated) be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

17. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

18. CHAIR'S REPORT AND URGENT ITEMS

18.1 External Auditor certificate and report 2014/15

The Town Clerk reported that confirmation of the outcome of the External Audit of the 2014/15 Accounts had been received. He tabled a brief report (copy attached to the minutes) which confirmed that the Certificate for the 2014/15 Accounts had been issued with no matters arising. The Committee

noted the satisfactory outcome of the External Audit and it was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) ***The outcome of the External Audit for the 2014/15 accounts be noted.***
- 2) ***Council be RECOMMENDED to note the External Auditor certificate and report for the 2014/15 Accounts.***

19. OFFICER'S REPORT

19.1 Annual Governance Review

The Committee had before it copies of the Members Code of Conduct and the Register of Interests (previously circulated). The Town Clerk explained that a thorough review of these documents had been undertaken last autumn as a result of revisions the Nolan Principles which underpin the Code. The Committee acknowledged that these were complex documents and considered them clear. No changes were proposed and it was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

The contents of the Members Code of Conduct and the Register of Interests be noted.

19.2 Internal Auditor

The Committee received a copy of the Letter of Engagement (previously circulated) which set out details of the scale of fees and terms of the contract with the Internal Auditor. The Town Clerk confirmed that an Internal Audit was due and that the Committee would receive a full report on the outcome. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Letter of Engagement with Internal Auditor be noted.

19.3 Complaints Procedure

19.3.1 The Committee had before it the Town Council's Complaints Procedure (previously circulated) which was due for review. It was noted that Officers were also undertaking a review of complaints received during the year and an analysis of the data would be presented to the Committee at the next meeting. The Town Clerk outlined the procedure for identifying and handling a complaint and stated that staff were encouraged to adopt a positive attitude when dealing with them. He went on to provide clarification regarding the procedure for handling complaints against the Town Clerk and the formation of a Panel to deal with issues where the complainant was dissatisfied with the outcome. It was noted that complaints against the Town Clerk were referred to the Finance and Resources Manager and the Town Mayor and that Panel meetings were held in private as they often had employment implications which it was not appropriate to discuss in an open meeting. The Town Clerk stated that the Panel could issue a public statement once the matter had been resolved.

19.3.2 A discussion ensued regarding what constituted a complaint and it was noted that comments were often made that might not be a grievance but could help identify priorities and highlight procedural issues. Members considered that this type of feedback could also identify areas for improvement and that the policy could be improved to encourage this. It was also noted that complaints could constitute Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulation requests and the Committee felt that the policy required further clarification about identifying these. Whilst it was acknowledged that Members received information about handling complaints as part of the induction process, the Committee considered that it would be beneficial if more guidance was available for Councillors. There was also some discussion about how complaints against Councillors were handled and Members sought further clarification regarding the role of the Monitoring Officer. It was agreed that the Town Clerk would take these points forward as part of a review of the Procedure. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

The Town Council's Complaints Procedure be reviewed and a revised document presented to the Committee at the February meeting.

20. MASTERPLAN – NORTH LITTLEHAMPTON

There was nothing to report.

21. EXEMPT BUSINESS

There was none.

The meeting closed at 7.02pm.

CHAIR