

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

**WEDNESDAY, 26 JANUARY 2011
(9.00 - 10.40 AM)**

Present: D Macnab (Acting Chief Executive) (Chairman) C O'Boyle (Director of Corporate Support Services), R Palmer (Director of Finance and ICT), I Willett (Assistant to the Chief Executive) and B Bassington (Chief Internal Auditor)

**Apologies for
Absence:**

Place: Room 1.05, First Floor, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping, Essex

69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

R Palmer declared an interest in item 15(a) insofar as it related to Case 1/2010 where he was the complainant.

70. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 8.12.10

Agreed subject to a correction in the First Action Note under Minute 65 (Parish Councils – Default Powers) to substitute “CIPFA” for “CIFA”.

71. MATTERS ARISING

(a) Norway House, North Weald – Internal Audit Study of Establishment

Noted that a follow-up audit was now in progress and that a report would be submitted to the next meeting on interim findings.

Action:

B Bassington to pursue.

(b) Former Chief Executive – Contract of Employment (Minute 64)

Noted that the net cost to the Council in respect of the engagement of external solicitors in this matter had been reduced from £31,250 to £19,500 following recent negotiations.

Noted that the net cost of external solicitors advising the former Chief Executive had been reduced from £3672 to £3607.50 as a result of recent negotiations

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(c) Parish Councils – Default Powers (Minute 65)

Noted that enquiries had been made regarding any default powers falling on the Council as a result of significant financial problems in a Parish or Town Council.

Noted that advice seemed to be contradictory and that the matter was still being pursued.

Action:

C O'Boyle to report back.

72. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Noted.

73. PKF - AUDIT LETTER 2009/10

Agreed.

Action:

R Palmer to pursue.

74. PKF - FEE OUTTURN SUMMARY 2009/10

Agreed.

Action:

R Palmer to pursue.

75. PKF - CERTIFICATION OF GRANT CLAIMS

Agreed.

Action:

R Palmer to pursue.

76. PKF - ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN 2010/11

Agreed.

Action:

R Palmer to pursue.

77. TREASURY MANAGEMENT

Draft report for Audit and Governance Committee on 14 February 2011 agreed.

Action:

R Palmer/B Moldon to pursue.

78. BENEFITS - FRAUD STRATEGY

Agreed that a draft report for the Audit and Governance Committee be approved subject to the following:

- (a) Report – check figure tabulation in paragraph 4;
- (b) Strategy
 - (i) delete first paragraph;
 - (ii) fraud prevention (last paragraph) – amend to “likely to include 640 home visits”.

Action:

R Palmer/J Twinn to finalise report.

79. INTERNAL AUDIT - DRAFT QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT (OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2010)

Agreed that the Monitoring Report be submitted to the next Audit and Governance Committee meeting subject to the following comments:

(a) Planning Fees

Issue corporate advice on reconciliation of accounts.

(b) Freedom of Information Act

Refer the importance of complying with procedure for recording FOI requests to the next Extended Management Board meeting.

Noted that a programme of FOI rep meetings was being compiled and that further training/guidance would be given in the use of the software recording system.

Agreed that consideration be given to responsibility for entering FOI cases in the IT system.

Agreed that responsibility for the service be amended to Acting Chief Executive in the report.

Agreed that D Macnab should attend the next meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Action:

B Bassington to finalise report.

I Willett to pursue FOI initiatives.

80. RE-USE OF PUBLIC SECTOR INFORMATION

Agreed that the sub-delegation of applications under these regulations to the Director of Environment and Street Scene in respect of CCTV material be supported and included for approval by the Council as part of the forthcoming review of officer delegation.

Agreed that the proposed charges be updated to reflect current hourly rates for the designated officers.

Agreed that the policy documents submitted to the meeting be updated including hourly rates.

Agreed that the policy be amended by including the Information Commissioner's advice on these applications.

Agreed that consideration be given to charging for extracts from webcast meetings of the Council subject to no charge being made in respect of persons who do not have access to the internet.

Action:

I Willett to pursue amendment of policy, uprating of hourly rates and possible charges for webcast extracts.

J Gilbert to make reference to Information Commissioner guidance in dealing with CCTV requests.

81. AUTHORISED SIGNATORY LISTS

Revised template agreed.

Action:

R Palmer to pursue.

Directors to note.

82. STANDARDS COMMITTEE

(a) Complaints, Assessments, Reviews and Adjudications

Noted that an assessment of the investigator's report in respect of EFDC 9/2009 had now taken place and no further action was to be taken.

Noted that in respect of Case EFDC 1/2010, a formal adjudication had been held and no breach of the Code had been found.

Noted that the Panel had asked for details of the cost of the investigation which had been conducted externally in respect of EFDC 1/2010.

(b) Nazeing Parish Council – Direction from Standards for England

Noted that a report was awaited from the trainer dealing with the first phase of implementing the Direction indicating concerns about the limited chance for a positive outcome from the programme.

Noted that the report, when received, would be the basis for discussion with Standards for England regarding the future of the Direction.

Noted that in the event that Standards for England were persuaded to lift the Direction, two complaints which had been deferred pending the outcome of action on the Direction would also need to be dealt with.

Noted that in the meantime the rest of the current training programme had been deferred.

Action:

C O'Boyle/I Willett to report back.

(c) Standards Committee (18.1.11)

Noted that there had been a preliminary discussion at the Standards Committee meeting on 18 January 2011 concerning the Government's intention to disband Standards for England and Local Standards Committees.

Noted that in discussion, some members of the Committee had favoured the replacement of the present mandatory code with a local code in respect of those elements which did not depend on the present Standards for England regime but there seemed little support for the continuation of a voluntary Standards Committee.

Noted that the relevant legislation had still to complete its passage through Parliament so the Committee had deferred any formal approach to the Council on these matters but at this stage there remained issues to be clarified about granting dispensations from the effect of interest and how these would be dealt with within the Council's organisation.

83. DATE FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Next meeting – 23 February 2011.

Agreed that future meetings of the Corporate Governance Group be held at 9.30 am in the Acting Chief Executive's office.

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