

**MINUTES OF A JOINT MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEES
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON TUESDAY, 7 APRIL 2009**

MEMBERS

* Cllr M J Howarth - Chairman

∅ Mr M Winterton - Vice-Chairman

* Mr R Allison

* Cllr B E Carson

* Cllr P Coulson

* Mr C Cox

* Cllr R F Croad

* Cllr G Date

* Mr P Dredge

* Mr S Dunham

* Cllr J T Pennington

* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

Officers in attendance:

All Agenda Items: Strategic Director (Resources), Internal Audit Manager, Monitoring Officer and Member Support Services Manager

Also in attendance:

Cllrs M J Hicks and R J Tucker

A.37/08 & **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**
S.31/08

RESOLVED

That Cllr M J Howarth be appointed Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

A.38/08 & **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
S.32/08

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting, but none were made.

A.39/08 & **CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE – COMPLIANCE REVIEW**
S.33/08

Consideration was given to a report which informed Members of the results of the compliance review of the 2008 Code of Corporate Governance.

The report stated that overall responsibility for Governance rested with the Council, but monitoring of compliance with the Code was carried out on its behalf by the S151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and Internal Audit Manager, who reported annually to the Audit and Standards Committees.

The result of the compliance review was considered to be generally satisfactory, with only a small number of gaps identified against three of the six principles. The most significant of these gaps was the absence of formal guidance for officers on the day to day management of a partnership including governance issues, although a draft Partnership Working guidance document was being produced, but was not yet completed.

In discussion, particular reference was made to:-

- (a) updates on the gaps for principles (as highlighted in the presented report). Whilst officers provided the Committees with updates on each of these gaps, Members were anxious to progress these issues, especially since they had also been identified in the report presented to both Committees in 2008 (Minutes A.4/08 and S.8/08 also refer). As a consequence, each Committee **MOVED** and **SECONDED** an addition to its presented officer recommendation, seeking a six-monthly update on the five remaining outstanding actions;
- (b) the need for clarity within the 2008 Code of Corporate Governance. A Member believed that wording such as 'visions', 'aids' and 'aspirations' did not add clarity to the Code and, in fact, partly obscured the control process;
- (c) the publication of an annual report to communicate the Council's activities and achievements, its financial position and performance. Members felt that the combination of the Annual Report being published in the Council's magazine and the information produced in the annual booklet (which accompanied each Council Tax statement) amounted to the communication of a sufficient level of information;
- (d) the 'Towards and Beyond Excellence Plan'. Officers advised that a new version of this key internal corporate improvement plan, which contained the 'Improvement Vision,' would be produced during the 2009/10 financial year;
- (e) setting a tone for the Council by creating a climate of openness, support and respect. A Member commented that the Council was particularly good at setting such a tone. However, he also accepted that it was not easy to reflect this performance in a document such as the Code;
- (f) reviewing the performance of Members. The Committees were informed that performance reviews would be an element of the wider Member Development Strategy, which was to be progressed in the upcoming months. In response, a number of Members expressed their support for the implementation of a Member performance review scheme.

In respect of the Audit Committee only, it was then:

RESOLVED

That the Audit Committee:-

1. note the findings of the Compliance Review of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance 2008, and significant issues to be taken to the 2008/09 Annual Governance Statement; and
2. wish to receive a six-monthly update on the five remaining outstanding actions (as highlighted in the presented report).

In respect of the Standards Committee only, it was then:

RESOLVED

That the Standards Committee:-

1. note the findings of the Compliance Review of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance 2008, the significant issues to be taken to the 2008/09 Annual Governance Statement and grants its approval to the action plan; and
2. wish to receive a six-monthly update on the five remaining outstanding actions (as highlighted in the presented report).

(Meeting commenced at 2.00pm and concluded at 3.00pm)

Chairman