



Notes of a meeting of the ESPO Finance and Audit Subcommittee held at County Hall, Glenfield, Leicestershire on Wednesday, 25 February 2026.

PRESENT (via MS Teams)

Cllr. R. Wyatt (in the Chair) – Cambridgeshire County Council  
Cllr. T. Bridgwood – Lincolnshire County Council  
Cllr. N. Garland – Warwickshire County Council  
Cllr. J. James – Norfolk County Council  
Cllr. M. Jamil – Peterborough City Council

Apologies

Mr. Harrison Fowler – Leicestershire County Council

In Attendance (via MS Teams)

**ESPO**

Kristian Smith – Managing Director  
Gary Tapp – Commercial Financial Controller  
Anthony Khayat – Head of Strategic Finance

**Leicestershire County Council**

Matt Davis – Audit Manager  
Simone Hines – Consortium Treasurer  
Jillian Jeffers – Legal Services (Team Leader – Commercial, Contracts and Procurement)  
Neil Jones – Head of Internal Audit and Assurance  
Angie Smith – Democratic Services Officer

25. Chairman's Announcement

The Chairman advised that the meeting was being held virtually in accordance Standing Order 21.6 of the ESPO Constitution. The meeting had been scheduled to be held via MS Teams as the formal meeting held on 11 February 2026 had been inquorate. A note of that inquorate meeting, filed with these notes, had been circulated for Members information.

In accordance with SO 21.6 the Chairman confirmed that the decisions taken at the meeting today would be communicated in writing to all members of the Subcommittee for affirmation.

26. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2025 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

27. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

28. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

29. Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector - Governance Documents.

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Consortium Treasurer which provided details on important governance documents required for conformance with Global Internal Audit Standards effective in the UK public sector from 1 April 2025. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 5' is filed with these minutes.

The resolution was moved by Cllr. Wyatt and seconded by Cllr. Garland.

RESOLVED:

That the Sub-Committee:

- a) Noted the work undertaken to develop the three GIAS UK (Public Sector) governance documents.
- b) Agreed a delegation to the Consortium Treasurer to make any necessary minor changes to each document.
- c) Requested a report on the use of AI explaining chosen targets and how AI use would be monitored to be brought to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee.

30. Annual Internal Audit Plan 2026-27.

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Consortium Treasurer which sought approval of the ESPO Internal Audit Plan 2026-27. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 6' is filed with these minutes.

The resolution was moved by Cllr. Wyatt and seconded by Cllr. Bridgwood.

RESOLVED:

That the Sub-Committee:

- a) Noted the contents of the report.
- b) Approved the ESPO Internal Audit Plan 2026-27.

Members requested that recommendations should be added to include the additional request for:

- c) That an audit of employee wellbeing, to be scoped following the results of the staff survey and wellbeing indices work.

- d) It was requested that information on ESPO's data management procedures and the organisation's capability to use data effectively to support business growth be circulated to Members of the Sub-Committee.

31. Internal Audit Service - Progress Against the 2025-26 Internal Audit Plan.

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Consortium Treasurer which provided a summary of work undertaken by Leicestershire County Council's Internal Audit Service (LCCIAS) during the period 23 September 2025 to 26 January 2026. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 7' is filed with these minutes.

The resolution was moved by Cllr. Wyatt and seconded by Cllr. Garland.

RESOLVED:

That the Sub-Committee noted:

- a) The contents of the report.
- b) The progress update received for the 2025-26 Plan.
- c) There were no high importance recommendations within the Sub-Committee's domain.

32. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Sub-Committee would be held on 7 October 2026, at 10.30am.

33. Exclusion of the Press and Public.

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 10 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and, in all circumstances, the public interest of maintaining exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

34. Financial Performance Update - 9 months to December 2025.

The Sub-Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Officer of ESPO and the Consortium Treasurer, which provided an update on the financial performance of ESPO for the nine months to December 2025. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

The exempt report was not for publication as it contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Arising from discussion, Members discussed and asked questions on the following:

- Observed that performance to date was strong and echoed through the report despite market contraction.
- Reduction on warehouse and driving costs, which had helped balance agency costs, with demand management observed weekly.
- Product margins and competitive pricing.

The resolution was moved by Cllr. Wyatt and seconded by Cllr. Bridgwood.

RESOLVED:

The Sub-Committee noted the update provided on the financial performance of ESPO for the nine months to December 2025.

35. Budget 2026/27.

The Sub-Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Officer of ESPO and the Consortium Treasurer, which provided an update on the financial performance of ESPO for the nine months to December 2025. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

The exempt report was not for publication as it contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Arising from discussion, Members discussed and asked questions on the following:

- Catalogue sales, rebate volume, and challenges for the year ahead due to educational supplies market contraction.
- The running costs of fleet vehicles – EVs versus Diesel.
- A request was made that the Energy Team provide a report on peer-to-peer trading at a future meeting.

The resolution was moved by Cllr. Wyatt and seconded by Cllr. Bridgwood.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The budget 2026/27 be approved for submission to the Management Committee for approval.
- b) The Energy Team provide a report on peer-to-peer trading to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee.

36. Risk Review.

The Sub-Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Officer of ESPO and the Consortium Treasurer, which provided an overview of ESPO's risk landscape. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 13' is filed with these minutes.

The exempt report was not for publication as it contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Arising from discussion, Members discussed and asked questions on the following:

- The benefits of recruiting internally or externally.

The resolution was moved by Cllr. Wyatt and seconded by Cllr. Bridgwood.

RESOLVED:

That the Sub-Committee noted the overview of ESPO's risk landscape.

10.30am to 10.59am  
25 February 2026

CHAIRMAN