

Governance Matters



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Issue 5

June 2006

Welcome to the June issue of Governance Matters.

As May has been such a busy month we have two extra pages of news for you in this issue. On Monday 22nd May all the Councillors met for the Annual Meeting. Turn to page 2 and 3 for details of what was decided.

Our regular in-depth feature 'Spotlight on..' focuses on the Constitution. The Constitution is the Council rule book and many of the documents we have referred to so far are contained within it. Further information on the Constitution and information regarding how to access it can be found at page 3.

We also take a look at what the governance committees have been doing over the past two months, and at their busy schedule for their first meetings of the new municipal year.

We hope you find the information helpful and interesting. You can play your part by emailing suggestions for articles to cxd.corporategovernance@leeds.gov.uk

Front Page News...

Standards Committee Annual Report

The Standards Committee Annual Report has now been completed and is available on the [Leeds City Council website](http://www.leeds.gov.uk) and on compact disk. The report provides an interesting insight into the work of the Committee, and their plans for the new municipal year.

The register of Members' interests goes 'live'

Following the installation of a new computer system, the register of Members' interests will be available to view online soon. This will make the register available to everyone 24 hours a day, rather than during office hours at Civic Hall, and will therefore contribute to the Council becoming more accountable and open.

'Cracking the Code' the e-learning module

In order to help new and existing Members to understand the Members' code of conduct and how to declare and register their interests, a new e-learning module has been produced. The module allows Members to explore the sections of the code at their own pace and then test their knowledge with quiz exercises. Copies of the module will be made available to all Members in due course. Contact Kay Small (Member Development Officer) for more information.

STOP PRESS...

The Annual Meeting 22nd May 2006

The Annual Meeting is the first meeting of the municipal year. At the meeting Council agrees the appointment of the Lord Mayor and Leaders of the Council for the municipal year as well as the terms of reference and membership of the Council committees. They are also informed of decisions taken by the Leader regarding the Executive arrangements for the year.

THE LORD MAYOR

The Lord Mayor is a Councillor who is chosen to be the 'First Citizen' of Leeds for a year, during which time he/she adopts a strictly non party political approach and represents the City in carrying out a wide range of engagements. The Lord Mayor also Chair's meetings of Council.

The Lord Mayor's proper mode of address is "The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of the City of Leeds" but it is correct and quite usual to use the short title "The Lord Mayor of Leeds".

This years Lord Mayor is **Councillor Mohammed Iqbal**

This years Deputy Lord Mayor is **Councillor Jack Dunn**

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leadership of the Council has remained the same as last year.

Councillor Mark Harris will be Leader of Council from 23rd May 2006 to 30th November 2006, and Deputy Leader from 1st December 2006 until 21st May 2007.

Councillor Andrew Carter will be Deputy Leader of the Council from 23rd May to 30th November 2006, and Leader from 1st December 2006 until 21st May 2007.

SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

At the Annual Meeting the Council Committees' terms of reference are approved. Key changes were made to the Council's scrutiny boards. Scrutiny boards will now be aligned to Executive Member portfolios.

The new scrutiny boards are:

- Children's Services;
- City Services;
- Development;
- Health and Adult Social Care;
- Leisure; and
- Neighbourhoods and Housing.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will now have responsibility for Central and Corporate Functions.

Further details of the Council's scrutiny arrangements are available from the **Scrutiny Support Team**.

STOP PRESS...

Executive Arrangements

The Executive Board is the principal decision making body of the Council. The Members of the Board and their portfolio or status are decided by the Leader of the Council and are announced at the Annual Meeting.

The role of an Executive Member is to promote and coordinate the Council's activities which contribute towards achieving the Corporate Plan objectives within their respective portfolios. These duties and responsibilities are exercised with a view either to appropriate recommendations being brought to the executive, or alternatively, an Executive Member may offer his/her views or advice to an officer but the Executive Member him/herself cannot take the decision. Executive Members are also assigned Lead Members.

The role of a Lead Member is to assist the Executive Member with specific aspects of his/her portfolio by carrying out policy development work.

For more information regarding which Councillors have been appointed as Lead Members please see Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, or follow this link: [Lead Members](#).

In the next issue of Governance Matters our 'Spotlight On...' feature will focus on the Council's decision making arrangements.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Central and Corporate

Executive Member – Cllr M Harris

Development

Executive Member – Cllr A Carter

City Services

Executive Member – Cllr S Smith

Neighbourhoods and Housing

Executive Member – Cllr J L Carter

Children's Services

Lead Executive Member – Cllr R Brett

Support Executive Member – Cllr R Harker

Leisure

Executive Member – Cllr J Procter

Adult Health and Social Care

Executive Member – Cllr P Harrand

Customer Services

Executive Member – Cllr D Blackburn

Leader of the Labour Group

Executive Member – Cllr K Wakefield

The Leader has also identified Cllr J Blake as a non-voting advisory member who will be able to attend and speak at meetings to assist the Labour nominated Executive Member.

JARGON BUSTER

Portfolio – the duties and area of responsibilities of an Executive Member.

Spotlight on...

The Constitution

The Local Government Act 2000 means that all Councils have to have a written Constitution. This document has to be made available to the public.

The Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and how officers and Members of the Council are expected to behave.

The Constitution is separated into 7 sections.

Part 1 – The summary and explanation is the best part of the Constitution to read if you want a brief summary of what the Council does and how it operates.

Part 2 - contains the articles. The articles set out the framework in which the Council operates. They can only be amended by Full Council. Article 2 is about Members of the Council and article 12 summarises the roles of the senior officers of the Council.

Part 3 – sets out who can take decisions and what they are about. It is important that all decisions are taken in line with this part of the Constitution as they might be unlawful if they are not.

Part 4 – sets out the rules of procedure for Council meetings, for example meetings of Council or Standards Committee

meetings. It also sets out the Council's rules regarding access to information.

Part 5 – contains many of the documents that we have referred to before in Governance Matters like the Member and officer codes of conduct. It also includes other 'local' codes and protocols which have been adopted by Leeds City Council.

Part 6 – is especially important for Members as it details the Member Allowances Scheme.

Part 7 – is a diagram detailing the Council's management structure.

CAUTION...

The Constitution is a 'living' document, and is constantly updated to reflect changes in the law. Other changes are agreed throughout the year by Council and other committees to ensure that the Constitution reflects the way in which the Council operates.

Once a year the whole Constitution is reviewed and updated by Council. A new copy will be issued in June 2006 after the Annual Meeting.

Both paper and online versions of the Constitution are updated by the Corporate Governance Team, however the online version is always the most up to date copy. You can find the Constitution in the [Corporate Governance section](#) of the Leeds City Council internet site.

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

19th April, 9th May and 17th May 2006

Among the issues considered were a number of reports of the external auditors and a number of amendments to the Constitution.

EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

The Committee receives reports from the external auditors on a variety of issues. In April it considered reports on partnership working, housing management, internal audit and third party client arrangements.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

It is the responsibility of the Committee to make recommendations to Council regarding changes to the Constitution. The Committee had a number of changes to consider as part of the annual review of the Constitution.

Among these changes the Committee agreed amended scrutiny arrangements. The details of these arrangements are contained in the Constitution, for example the scrutiny board terms of reference in part 3, and the scrutiny board and commission procedure rules in part 4.

Once the Committee had agreed these amendments they are then approved at the Annual Meeting ready for the Constitution to be reissued in the new municipal year.

29th June 2006

Items to be considered on 29th June include:

- The receipt of an external audit report on risk management.
- Annual reports on risk management, internal audit and the Standards Committee.
- A report regarding the **Corporate Governance Statement**.
- To receive the Statement of Accounts for 2005/6.

JARGON BUSTER

Corporate Governance Statement - Corporate Governance concerns the way in which the affairs of Council are handled by Councillors and officers and how the Council's stakeholders and partners are engaged in the Council's work. The purpose of the Corporate Governance Statement is to provide a public statement of how the Council is performing in these areas. It also supports a statutory function in that it incorporates the Council's Statement on Internal Control.

NEW MEMBERSHIP

Councillor E Minkin has been appointed to the Committee, replacing Councillor P Gruen.

Standards Committee

25th April 2006

The Committee approved the final draft of the Standards Committee Annual Report 2005/2006, and discussed the ODPM Select Committee report on the role and effectiveness of the Standards Board for England.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2005/2006

The Standards Committee approved the final draft of their annual report at this meeting. The report will now be published on the Leeds City Council internet page and circulated on CD. The annual report will now form an important part of the reporting arrangements between the Standards Committee and the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee.

ODPM SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT

Members of the Committee discussed the Third Special Report of the Government's session 2004/2005 regarding their response to ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee's report on the role and effectiveness of the Standards Board for England.

Members of the Committee discussed how the terms of the revised code of conduct would be defined, including the definition of 'unlawful behaviour'.

8th June 2006

Items to be considered in June include:

- A report outlining the relationship between the Standards Committee and Corporate Governance and Audit Committee for the 2006/2007 municipal year;
- A report outlining all complaints that have been referred to the Standards Board for England involving Leeds Members for the last 6 months.

NEW MEMBERSHIP

Councillor G Kirkland has returned as a Member of the Committee for the 2006/2007 municipal year. Councillor Kirkland was temporarily replaced by Councillor Jennings at the end of last year due to ill health.

THE NEXT ISSUE OF GOVERNANCE MATTERS

We hope you have found this issue of Governance Matters useful.

In the next issue we will focus on the Council's decision making processes.

If you have any ideas for our 'Spotlight On...' feature or any questions you would like answering, please contact the Corporate Governance Team on 0113 39 51632 / 0113 39 50261 or email us at xcd.corporategovernance@leeds.gov.uk