

Governance Matters



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Issue 6

August 2006

Welcome to the August issue of Governance Matters.

In Governance Matters this month our regular in-depth feature 'Spotlight on...' focuses on the Council's decision making processes. It will provide an overview of the arrangements for executive decision making, including the different types of decisions, arrangements for 'delegation', recording of decisions and scrutiny. All these arrangements are contained in the Council's Constitution and we will signpost you to the relevant sections. For further information see page 2.

We also take a look at what the governance committees considered at their June meetings, and at what is scheduled for their next meetings.

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...

Ethical Online Survey

During September / October all Councillors and a sample of senior officers will be asked to take part in an online survey regarding the Council's ethical framework.

The Audit Commission undertook a similar survey for the Council in 2004, so this year's survey will help us see where we have improved.

This survey is provided by the Audit Commission and several other local authorities have already taken part and recorded their results in a national database. Using this database we will be able to compare our results with those of other authorities.

The results of the survey will help the Council identify areas for improvement and what it needs to do to improve understanding and awareness of ethical standards.

Members and officers who are being asked to take part in the survey will be contacted in September.

The Constitution 2006/07

The Council's new Constitution for 2006/07 has now been published on the [Council's website](#). Members can access a hardcopy through their group office.

The Corporate Governance Statement 2006

The Council's Corporate Governance Statement for 2006 was signed off by Members at Corporate Governance and Audit Committee (CGA) on 29th June 2006. It is available on the [corporate governance page](#) of the Council's website.

Spotlight on...

Executive Decision making

In Leeds we have a Leader and Cabinet (Executive Board) model of decisions making. Most of the Authority's day-to-day decisions are the responsibility of the Executive Board. Area Committees and Officers also take executive decisions but only within specific delegated powers given to them by the Leader and Executive Board.

Delegating Executive Decisions

The Executive Board can take decisions itself, or it can **delegate** decisions to **committees** or officers.

JARGON BUSTER

Delegate - passing on authority.

Committees – group of Councillors charged with specific functions. Some committees also appoint non-Councillors (co-optees) to provide expertise, or to represent their community.

Types of Executive Decision

There are four different types of Executive Decision. These are:

- Key Decisions
- Major Decisions
- Significant Operational Decisions
- Administrative Decisions

Key decisions result in the Council spending or saving over £500,000 a year, or are likely to significantly effect communities living or working in two or more wards. All key decisions are contained in the [Forward Plan](#).

[Part 3](#) of the Constitution explains the other types of decision.

Officer decisions

Certain officers have delegated authority to take all types of decision. [Part 3 \(Section 3 a –d\)](#) of the Constitution also sets out what functions have been delegated to which officer.

For key, major and significant operational decisions officers must complete a delegated decision form which provides information regarding why the decision has been made and when it will be implemented. [Delegated decision forms](#) can be viewed on the Council's webpage.

Scrutiny and Call-In

The purpose of the Council's Scrutiny Boards is to hold the Executive to account.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) can 'call-in' decisions of:

- the Executive Board
- executive decisions taken by Area Committees; and
- key and major decisions taken by officers.

The OSC can recommend to the decision maker that the decision be reconsidered.

CAUTION...

It is possible to take a key decision that is not in the Forward Plan, however there are strict procedures that must be followed. See the [Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules](#) for details.

If these procedures are not followed then the Scrutiny Board can require the Executive to report to Council.

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

29th June 2006

Among the issues considered by the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee were the Corporate Governance Statement and the Statement of Accounts.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Each year the committee approves the Council's Corporate Governance Statement. This is then signed by the Leader and the Chief Executive.

The Statement is an audited public document on the adequacy of the Council's governance arrangements. It also forms part of the Statement of Accounts.

In order for Members to be satisfied that the information in the Statement is accurate many of the other reports presented to and considered by Members at this meeting provided an update on aspects on the Council's governance arrangements.

For example, the committee received annual reports on risk management, internal audit and on the work of the Standards Committee.

The Statement can be viewed by following the link on page 1.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Statement of Accounts has to be agreed by Members each year in line with a statutory deadline, which this year was the 30th June.

The Accounts contain all the financial statements, explanatory and disclosure notes required by law, in order to fairly represent the financial position of the Council.

The accounts are currently being audited and the auditors will present a report on the accounts to the Committee in September.

27th September 2006

Items scheduled for consideration on 27th September include:

- The Local Government Ombudsman's annual letter and a quarterly update on complaints to the Ombudsman.
- A report on the Council's progress in developing a more consistent corporate approach to consultation and engagement.
- A progress report regarding the revised Personnel Panel arrangements.
- An update on the launch of the ethical audit.
- The auditor's report on the audited Statement of Accounts

Standards Committee

8th June 2006 / 26th July 2006

Since the last edition of Governance Matters there have been two meetings of the Standards Committee. Among the matters considered by the Committee were:

- complaints that have been referred to the Standards Board for England (SBE) involving Leeds Members; and
- the Members' induction period.

COMPLAINTS TO THE STANDARDS BOARD

Every six months the Committee receives a report regarding the number, nature and outcome of complaints made to the SBE about Leeds Members. Annually the Committee also considers the position in Leeds compared to the national picture. Both these issues were considered in one report to the Committee.

The Committee were particularly pleased by the low number of complaints made against Leeds' Parish Councillors compared to the national picture, and with the low number of allegations involving Leeds Members referred for investigation.

MEMBER / OFFICER PROTOCOL

The Member/Officer protocol is reviewed annually and as part of this review the Committee considered a number of proposed amendments to the protocol. The Committee agreed that the proposed amendments should be sent out for consultation to the following fora: Chief Support Services Officer Group; HR Strategy Group; Corporate Joint Consultative Committee.

You can also view the draft protocol [here](#), any comments should be forwarded to the [Corporate Governance Team](#).

4th October 2006

Items to be considered at the October meeting include:

- The regular six monthly item on complaints referred to the SBE regarding Leeds City Council Members.
- A review of the arrangements in place for reviewing the register of Members' interests.
- A report on the Members' Code of Conduct, regarding whether the Code has been complied with and making proposals for any amendments.
- A report on the protocol on Member/Education Leeds relations, reviewing its' operation and making proposals for any amendments.

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 decision making by the full Council.

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

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