

Governance Matters



Governance Services, 4th Floor West, Civic Hall, Leeds LS1 1UR
Tel: 0113 3951632
Email: cxd.corporategovernance@leeds.gov.uk

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Welcome to the February issue of Governance Matters.

In Governance Matters this month our regular in-depth feature 'Spotlight on...' focuses on the codes of conduct which govern how Members and officers should behave in their public life. These codes exist to ensure that Members and officers behave in the manner expected by the public. For more information see page 2.

We also take a look at what the governance Committees have been doing over the past two months, in particular the approval of the Standards Committee learning and development framework and the receipt of reports concerning risk management and internal audit by the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee.

We hope you find the information useful.

Remember that you can play your part by emailing suggestions for articles to [the Corporate Governance Team](#). We look forward to hearing from you.

Front Page News...

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee - Additional meeting

In January the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee held an additional meeting to consider and approve the annual audit and inspection letter. The letter highlights the audit work carried out over the previous year by KPMG (the Council's appointed auditor – see the 'Jargon Buster' on page 3) and was very positive about the Council's recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment results.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Report – 'Standards of Conduct in English Local Government: The Future'

In December the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) published the above discussion paper which responded to the recommendations made by the Standards Board for England about how the Member's code of conduct should be reviewed.

To read the discussion paper go to the ODPM website: www.odpm.gov.uk

Members' Register of Interests

The Corporate Governance Team is now responsible for the register of Members' interests; this was previously managed by Member Development. All queries should now be directed to [the Corporate Governance Team](#) (Tel: 0113 395 0261).

Spotlight on...

Members' code of conduct

In their official capacity, **and in their private life**, Members must:

- not conduct themselves in a manner which could bring their office or the Council into disrepute; and
- not use their position improperly to secure an advantage or disadvantage for themselves or anyone else.

In their official capacity only, Member's must:

- promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against people;
- treat others with respect, and not compromise the impartiality of officers of the Council;
- not disclose information given to them in confidence without permission and must not prevent people from accessing any information they are entitled to;
- act in accordance with the authority's requirements when using Council resources; and
- have regard to relevant advice provided by the *Section 151 Officer* and the *Monitoring Officer* when making decisions.

JARGON BUSTER

Monitoring Officer – Nicolé Jackson. Nicolé is also the Director of Legal and Democratic Services.

Section 151 Officer – Alan Gay. Alan is also the Director of Corporate Services.

If a Member knows of another Member breaking the code of

conduct, they must make their concerns known to the *Standards Board for England* as soon as possible. This requirement may be removed as part of the review of the code of conduct.

It is also a requirement of the code of conduct to register interests and any gifts and hospitality and declare any personal and prejudicial interests at meetings.

Officers' code of conduct

Officers are also subject to a code of conduct which is contained in part 5 of the constitution. Officers are responsible for ensuring that they comply with its requirements. The code covers the following issues:

- interests in contracts;
- gifts and hospitality;
- disclosure of information;
- political neutrality;
- relationships with stakeholders;
- appointment and employment;
- outside commitments;
- personal interests;
- equality;
- roles during tendering;
- corruption/fraud and theft;
- use of financial resources;
- sponsorship; and
- contact with the media.

HELP!

Members are able to discuss any issue about how to apply the code with the Monitoring Officer.

Officers are able to discuss the arrangements operating in their department with their departmental Head of Human Resources.

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

21st December 2006

Among the issues the Committee considered were two reports related to the Council's Risk Management framework and the half year report on internal audit.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered two reports related to risk management. The Committee was updated on the progress made on implementing a risk management framework across the Council and discussed in more detail the development of a risk register for Children's Services. Reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's corporate governance arrangements is a key element of the Committee's terms of reference and risk management is a central aspect of those arrangements.

Members of the Committee also took part in a risk management training session on the morning of the Committee.

HALF YEAR INTERNAL AUDIT

The Committee are regularly updated on the work of internal audit across the Council. The half year report provides an up date on the work that has been undertaken by audit and highlights areas of achievement and concern.

22nd February 2006

Items to be considered in February include:

- the receipt of two *external audit* reports, one on partnership working across the Council and one on housing management;
- a report providing details of the outcome of complaints to the Ombudsman;
- an update report on risk management matters; and
- a progress report on the integration of corporate governance considerations in the directors and chief officers appraisal scheme.

JARGON BUSTER

External Audit – External audit is an essential part of the process of ensuring public money is spent accountably.

The Council's external auditors are KPMG.

The auditors' work covers the audit of financial statements, and also aspects of corporate governance and arrangements to secure the economic, efficient and effective use of resources. Auditors may report aspects of their work to the public and other key stakeholders.

The Corporate Governance and Audit Committee receive all external audit reports that are produced, which helps them to maintain an overview of governance issues across the Council.

Standards Committee

19th January 2006

Among the issues the Committee considered were the Committee's new learning and development framework and communication plan.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Committee approved their learning and development framework, which outlined the skills and knowledge required by the members of the Committee.

16th March 2006

Items to be considered at this meeting include:

- a report regarding the outcome of a review of available governance and other related training for Parish Council Members and clerks and the extent of take up within Parishes in Leeds;
- the most recent publications released by the *Standards Board for England*; and
- a regular report on the recent decisions of the Adjudication Panel for England's case tribunals.

JARGON BUSTER

The Standards Board for England is responsible for promoting high ethical standards and investigating allegations that Members' behaviour may have fallen short of the required standards.

The Standards Committee works closely with the Standards Board for England to provide support and guidance to Members regarding their behaviour. The Standards Board for England also commissions research projects in order to assess their performance and effectiveness, and ensure that they are promoting ethics in local government.

To find out more about the Standards Board, [visit their website](#).

THE NEXT ISSUE OF GOVERNANCE MATTERS

We hope you have enjoyed this issue of Governance Matters. In the next issue we will focus on the register of Members' interests.

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 [Corporate Governance Team](#)