

# Governance Matters



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In Governance Matters this month our regular in-depth feature 'Spotlight on...' focuses on the governance and standards issues in the run up to the local elections.

We will also take a look at what the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee and the Standards Committee considered at their last meetings, and at the work they have scheduled for their next meetings.

We hope you find the information helpful and interesting. In the next issue we will focus on the Annual Meeting.

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 [cxd.corporategovernance@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:cxd.corporategovernance@leeds.gov.uk)

## Front Page News...

### Constitution Amendments - Council Change Programme

In February 2007 the Executive Board authorised a series of proposals which form phase one of the Council's Change Programme. In order to implement phase one of the Change Programme the officer delegation schemes have been amended as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007.

#### New

**Director of Adult Social Services** – Sandie Keene

#### **Delegations from the Leader to the following Chief Officers;**

- Chief Officer (Children's Social Services)
- Chief Officer (Early Years and Youth Service)

#### Re-designated Posts

**Director of City Development** – Jean Dent

- Re-designation of the previous Director of Development
- New functions added regarding leisure & culture

**Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods** – Neil Evans

- Re-designation of previous Director of Neighbourhoods & Housing
- New functions added regarding jobs and skills

**Director of Resources** – Alan Gay

- Re-designation of previous Director of Corporate Services

**Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance)** – Nicole Jackson

- Re-designation of previous Director of Legal & Democratic Services

#### Deletion of Posts

**Director of Learning & Leisure** – John Davies has retired

**Chief Social Services Officer** – Jim Wilson has left the Council

## Spotlight on...

### Local Elections

In last month's issue we said we would focus on governance and standards issues in the run up to the local elections.

#### Before the election

The Council entered the official 'purdah' period for the May elections on 27<sup>th</sup> March. This places limitations on Members who are standing for election and other politicians directly involved in the election.

The purpose of these limitations is to prevent business conducted during this period being used to secure electoral advantage. There is [guidance](#) available for Councillors and officers which can be found on the Council's intranet site.

This guidance covers such issues as:

- avoiding meetings which have the potential to be politically contentious;
- the nature of correspondence with constituents; and
- involvement in proactive publicity.

#### After the election

##### Forms to return

Following the election successful candidates will be provided with an 'induction pack'. This pack contains several forms which have to be completed and returned within strict deadlines.

The acceptance of office form includes an agreement to abide by the **Members' Code of Conduct**

(see issues 2, 3, 4, and 8 for further information).

Members are also expected to register their financial and other interests within 28 days of the election. Detailed guidance is available in the induction pack.

All successful candidates will also be asked to complete a Criminal Records Bureau application form as soon as possible following the election. This check will enable Members to perform various roles, such as corporate parenting or school governorship, that would bring them into contact with children under 18 years of age or vulnerable adult groups.

##### Training

Training will be available to all Members during the induction period on various governance topics.

These include sessions on:

- Council Structures and Decision Making;
- Learning the Ropes – Conduct of Council Meetings;
- Understanding Scrutiny; and
- Understanding the Members' Code of Conduct.

#### **CAUTION...**

Successful candidates must complete their acceptance of office form before the Annual Meeting, otherwise they will not be able to take part as a Councillor. They are also required to complete their register of interests form within 28 days, otherwise they will be in breach of the Members' Code of Conduct and could be reported to the Standards Board for England.

## Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

### 7<sup>th</sup> March 2007

The meeting scheduled for the 7<sup>th</sup> March was cancelled and agenda items deferred to the April meeting.

### 25<sup>th</sup> April 2007

Items due to be considered in April include:

- An report on the Council's risk management framework, and business continuity management arrangements.
- A report regarding complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman during the last quarter.
- The annual report on compliance with laws and regulations.
- A quarterly report on the progress of the Delivering Successful Change project.
- A report regarding the annual review of the Constitution, asking Members to consider and approve any amendments for recommendation to the Annual meeting of Full Council.

#### CONSTITUTION AMENDMENTS

A number of amendments to the Protocol on Member/officer Relations were approved by the Standards Committee at their meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2007. The Corporate Governance and Audit Committee also approved a new Protocol for the Coordination of External Inspection and Audit Reports. See the [Constitution](#) page on the intranet for further details.

#### ETHICAL AUDIT WORKSHOPS

On the 6<sup>th</sup> February and the 13<sup>th</sup> March the Standards Committee and relevant officers met to consider the results of the recent Ethical Audit. Among the issues they discussed were:

- The Members' and officers' Code of Conduct and the respondents awareness of them;
- Relationships between Members and officers;
- The profile, role, and achievements of the Standards Committee;
- The profile of the Leader, Chief Executive, and the Monitoring Officer;
- The Council's whistleblowing policy;
- How well the Standards Committee communicates with the rest of the Council regarding ethical matters; and
- How accessible information (e.g. the register of interests, committee agendas and reports) is to the public.

The Standards Committee will receive a summary of the discussion at their next meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2007, and a full action plan for approval at their first meeting of the next municipal year on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2007.

The action plan will provide the basis of the Standards Committee's work during 2007-08. It is hoped that in implementing these actions the Council will improve ethical awareness and understanding amongst Members, officers and the residents of Leeds, and that this will be reflected in the results of the next ethical audit.

## Standards Committee

**14<sup>th</sup> February 2007**

Among the issues considered was the proposed Leeds City Council response to the Department of Communities and Local Government.

### CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Members of the Committee considered the consultation document published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) along with the draft Leeds City Council response which all Members and several key officers had been invited to contribute to. The Committee discussed the proposed changes to the Members' Code of Conduct and made several amendments to the response. The response was sent to the DCLG in time for the deadline of 9<sup>th</sup> March 2007. We'll keep you updated of any changes in our 'Front Page News' section.

**11<sup>th</sup> April 2007**

Items to be considered in April include:

- A progress report on officer declarations of interests and register of offers of gifts and hospitality.
- A proposed amendment to the Code of Practice for the Determination of Planning Matters.
- Recent Standards Board for England publications.

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- A report on the Members' register of gifts and hospitality.
- A report on the ethical audit action plan.
- A report on the e-learning module on the Members' Code of Conduct and how it has been received.
- The final draft of the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2006/07.

### NEWSFLASH!

#### 'Cracking the Code' Part 2 released

Before the Council meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2007 the second part of the Code of Conduct e-learning module, produced by Governance Services and Member Development, was released. This section of the e-learning module concentrates on the general obligations of the Code of Conduct, for example showing respect and treating people equally. The stall was located in the ante-chamber before the Council meeting and Members were able to collect their copy as well as try out some of the exercises on a laptop. We would also like to say congratulations to the Member Development Team who were recently awarded the Yorkshire and Humber Charter for Member Development.



E-learning stall - 21st February 2007