

# Governance Matters



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Welcome to the December issue of Governance Matters.

This month our regular in-depth feature 'Spotlight on..' focuses on partnerships, in particular the work which has been done to identify the Council's significant partnerships.

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

Both Committees have had, or will be having additional meetings next month, and details of these are included in the Committee pages.

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

## ***Front Page News...***

### **Response to Ethical Online Survey**

Many thanks to those of you who responded to our Ethical Standards Survey in the past month. We have had a great response – 44% of those selected responded!

We will be in touch regarding the results once they have been analysed. These results will also be reported to the Standards Committee at their meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2008, and a draft action plan will have been created by the end of this municipal year.

### **Consultation on the Protocol on Member Officer Relations**

The Protocol on Member Officer Relations has recently been reviewed and a number of amendments have been suggested. The Standards Committee are interested in your comments on these changes, and any suggestions you may have for further amendments. See the Standards Committee page for more details of how to respond to the consultation.

### **Changes to Executive Arrangements**

From the beginning of December 2007 until May 2008, Councillor Andrew Carter will be the Leader of the Council. From 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2007 Councillor Brett has been assigned the Central and Corporate function portfolio and will be Councillor Carter's deputy. Also from 3<sup>rd</sup> December Councillor Golton has been appointed as Lead Executive Member for Children's Services.

## Spotlight on...

### Partnerships

#### Background to Partnerships

Under the 'harder test' Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Framework, there is a greater focus on partnership working. One of the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) requires that the Council has identified its significant partnerships and has appropriate governance arrangements in place for each of them.

The CPA also requires that 'the financial performance of significant partnerships is regularly reviewed, linked to outputs, and the results shared with partners and acted upon', and that 'the risk management process specifically considers risks in relation to significant partnerships and provides for assurances to be obtained about the management of those risks.'

The Council's progress towards achieving these objectives is outlined below.

#### Partnerships Framework

In June 2007 the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee approved a Partnerships Framework for Leeds City Council. This framework provided the Council's definition of a **partnership**, and a set of criteria for assessing whether a partnership was significant or not.

#### JARGON BUSTER

The Council defines a **partnership** as an agreement between two or more independent bodies to work collectively to achieve an objective, excluding

- any contractual agreement entered into by the council; or
- any agreement where the council provides an organisation with grant aid, except where these arrangements create a separate decision-making structure.

To assess the significance of a partnership the council takes into account:

- the resources which the council contributes to the partnership;
- the partnership's contribution to the achievement of priorities in the Corporate Plan;
- the nature of the consequences if the partnership were to fail;
- the type of decisions the partnership makes;
- whether the partnership is required by law or to secure funding; and
- the extent to which the partnership helps the council to manage risk.

The framework requires the Council to review each of its partnerships at least annually against these criteria, to identify which partnerships are significant.

## Significant partnerships

Since the framework was approved, a survey of directors has been undertaken to identify the Council's significant partnerships, using the criteria above.

The list of significant partnerships was presented to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee at their meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

Once these significant partnerships had been identified, a review of their governing documents was undertaken. The Framework requires each partnership to agree a governing document which sets out:

- its functions;
- its role;
- its decision-making framework;
- the respective roles and responsibilities of individual partners, including in relation to finance and audit functions;
- a dispute resolution procedure; and
- exit provisions.

The lead officer for each partnership was required to report whether its governing documents complied with the above requirements, along with details of any failure to comply, and a proposed timescale for any follow up actions to ensure compliance. The results of this review were also reported to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

## Next Steps

One of the next steps in the Partnerships review is to create a 'Partnerships Toolkit'.

The toolkit will supplement the Partnerships Framework and will be a practical tool, for use by lead officers and others. It will have "signposts" to other relevant council policies and procedures, and examples of good practice.

The structure of the toolkit will correspond with the six principles set out in the council's Code of Corporate Governance.

### THE COUNCIL'S SIX CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

1. Focussing on the Council's purpose and community needs;
2. Having clear responsibilities and arrangements for accountability;
3. Good conduct and behaviour;
4. Informed, transparent decision making and managing risk;
5. Developing skills and capacity; and
6. Engaging stakeholders.

### CAUTION...

If you are considering entering into a partnership, you need to be aware of the guidance in the Partnerships Framework.

All partnerships will need to be reviewed annually to assess their significance and to ensure that their governance arrangements continue to comply with the framework.

## Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

28<sup>th</sup> November 2007

Among the issues the committee considered was the recent review of polling districts and places.

### REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 required the Council to conduct a full review of polling districts, places and stations within Leeds by the end of 2007.

The review involved preparing proposals, consulting on these proposals and then making a final recommendation to the Corporate Governance and Audit (CGA) Committee for a polling scheme for Leeds.

The Committee approved a scheme based on the proposals put forward by officers, with a two amendments.

The Committee also requested that officers prepare a report for February dealing with some outstanding issues from this review, in particular some new proposals that have been put forward, and also examining how the review process can be improved to ensure the best outcome for electors.

The scheme, as it was proposed by officers, and the details of the Committee's resolution can be accessed on the Council's website by following the link below:  
CGA Audit Committee, 28<sup>th</sup> November.

### NEWSFLASH

There will be an additional meeting of the CGA Committee on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> January to deal with items that were deferred from November's meeting.

### 14<sup>th</sup> January 2008

Items due to be considered at the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2008 include:

- the half-year update report from Internal Audit;
- update reports on the Corporate Governance Statement action plan and Delivering Successful Change;
- the six-monthly report from the Standards Committee; and
- a report regarding the Council's whistle-blowing policy.

### 6<sup>th</sup> February 2008

Items due to be considered at the meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2008 include:

- a report following up the Committee's resolution in relation to the review of polling districts and places;
- an update report regarding Ombudsman complaints; and
- the first draft of the CGA Committee's annual report.

## Standards Committee

**10<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

Among the issues the Committee considered were the annual report on the Protocol on Member Officer Relations.

### **PROTOCOL ON MEMBER OFFICER RELATIONS**

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report to the Committee outlining the operation of the protocol in the last year, and whether any amendments were required to the Protocol in light of any recent issues.

Members agreed to the updated version of the Protocol being circulated for consultation with the Corporate Joint Consultative Committee, the Corporate Governance Board and the Human Resources Leadership Group.

We would also appreciate any comments you may have on the draft protocol. You can [view a copy here](#), and forward any comments to the [Corporate Governance Team](#) by Friday 28<sup>th</sup> December 2007. Comments received by this date will be included in a further report to the Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

**7<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

The Standards Committee held an additional meeting during November to consider the final report into a recent local investigation.

### **LOCAL INVESTIGATION REPORT**

Members of the Standards Committee agreed with the investigating officer's finding that the Councillor had not breached the Code of Conduct, although they did make a recommendation to the Council as a result of the complaint. The Committee requested that differences between the two complaints procedures, the Council complaints system and the Standards Board complaints system, be clarified and that this information be distributed to all Members, senior officers, One Stop Shops, and ALMOs.

The Committee will also receive a further report from the investigating officer in December, which will outline any lessons to be learnt from this case.

**5<sup>th</sup> December 2007**

Items due to be considered at the meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007 include a report detailing the number of complaints made regarding Members of Leeds City Council and Parish Councillors in the last six months.

### **THE NEXT ISSUE OF GOVERNANCE MATTERS**

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

You may have noticed that we have not covered the issue of Access to Information in this issue. We aim to focus on this in a future spotlight on.

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)