

Governance Matters



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Issue 17

June 2008

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 Thursday 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 recent changes to the Budget and Policy Framework, Key Decisions, and Scrutiny Call-In arrangements.

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](#). The report provides an interesting insight into the work of the Committee, and their plans for the new municipal year.

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report

The Corporate Governance and Audit Committee produced its first Annual Report this year, and it will be available to download from the Leeds City Council website soon. The report summarises the Committee's achievements in 2007/08 and their future plans.

Constitution Amendments

A number of changes to the Constitution were agreed at the Annual Meeting of Council. The main changes are summarised in 'Spotlight on...'. An updated version of the [Constitution](#) will be published on the Council's website and will also be circulated in hard copy to relevant officers, in the near future.

Code of Conduct Complaints

Complaints of misconduct against Leeds City Councillors and Parish Councillors in Leeds used to be received and considered by the Standards Board for England (SBE). The SBE stopped receiving these complaints on 8th May 2008, and they are now going to be received and assessed locally by the Standards Committee.

The new contact details are:

Tel: 0113 39 50035

Email: councillorconduct@leeds.gov.uk

STOP PRESS...

The Annual Meeting 22nd May 2008

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 Frank Robinson**](#)

This years Deputy Lord Mayor is [**Councillor Gerald Wilkinson**](#)

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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

[**Councillor Richard Brett**](#) will be Leader of Council from 23rd May 2008 to 30th November 2008, and Deputy Leader from 1st December 2008 until the Annual Meeting 2009.

[**Councillor Andrew Carter**](#) will be Deputy Leader of the Council from 23rd May to 30th November 2008, and Leader from 1st December 2008 until the Annual Meeting 2009.

SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

At the Annual Meeting the Council Committees' terms of reference are approved. Key changes were made to the Council's scrutiny boards. The new format mirrors the 'One Council' directorates and provides links to the five strands of the Local Area Agreement.

The new scrutiny boards are:

- Scrutiny Board (Central & Corporate Functions);
- Scrutiny Board (City Development);
- Scrutiny Board (Children's Services);
- Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods);
- Scrutiny Board (Health);
- Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Care); and
- Scrutiny Board (City and Regional Partnerships).

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.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Central and Corporate

Executive Member – Cllr R Brett

Development and Regeneration

Executive Member – Cllr A Carter

Environmental Services

Executive Member – Cllr S Smith

Neighbourhoods and Housing

Executive Member – Cllr J L Carter

Children's Services

Lead Executive Member – Cllr S Golton

Learning

Executive Member – Cllr R Harker

Leisure

Executive Member – Cllr J Procter

Adult Health and Social Care

Executive Member – Cllr P Harrand

Leader of the Opposition and Labour Group

Executive Member – Cllr K Wakefield

Leader of the Morley Independent Group

Executive Member – Cllr R Finnigan

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.

The Executive Members are assisted with specific aspects of their portfolio by **Deputy Executive Members**, who carry out policy and development work.

Governance Committees – functions and membership

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee (CGA)

At the Annual Meeting the Council amended the Terms of Reference for CGA. The Council decided that amendments to the Constitution should be considered by a special Committee set up for this purpose.

You can find details of the new membership of CGA Committee on the Committee page.

Constitutional Proposals Committee

The membership of the [Constitutional Proposals Committee](#) includes the leader of each political group, and will meet on an ad hoc basis to recommend Constitutional changes to Full Council.

Standards Committee

Prior to the Annual Meeting the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) approved several changes to Article 9A and the Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee by delegated decision. These changes were needed for the Standards Committee to begin considering complaints of misconduct against Leeds City Councillors and Parish Councillors in Leeds.

The updated membership of the Standards Committee can be found on the Standards Committee page.

Spotlight on...

Changes to the Council's Constitution

At the Annual Meeting the Council agreed several changes to the Constitution. The main changes are set out below.

The Budget and Policy Framework

The Council's budget and policy framework is set out in [Article 4 of the Constitution](#). The Council decided that the following policies should be included within the budget and policy framework:

- Health and Wellbeing Plan;
- Economic Development Strategy;
- Climate Change Strategy; and
- Leeds Housing Strategy.

The Council also decided to remove the following policies and plans from the framework, as it is no longer obliged to produce them:

- Annual Library Plan;
- Children's Services Plan; and
- Council Plan.

Key and Major Decisions

Key decisions of the executive must be entered into the forward plan and are subject to call-in. The threshold for a Key Decision in Leeds was changed at the Annual Meeting.

The Council have decided that the key decision threshold should be lowered to **£250,000**. This means more decisions being entered on the forward plan,

allowing for increased engagement by Councillors and the public before decisions are taken.

Major decisions are also subject to call-in, but are not required to be entered onto the forward plan. Major decisions cost or save the Council over **£100,000** a year. This definition is set out in the guidance notes on delegated decision making, in [Part 3 of the Constitution](#).

Scrutiny Call-In Arrangements

The recent Corporate Assessment recommended that the Council's Call-In arrangements should be reviewed.

The Council has decided that Call-In requests should be signed by:

- two non-executive elected Members (who are not from the same political group); or
- any five non-executive elected Members.

In addition, Call-In requests are now to be considered by the relevant Scrutiny Board, rather than the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, meaning that the Members with the relevant subject knowledge will make the decision.

CAUTION...

Call-In should only be used where Members have evidence which suggests that the decision-maker did not take the decision in accordance with the principles set out in [Article 13 \(Decision-making\) of the Constitution](#).

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

23rd April 2008

Among the issues considered at the April meeting were amendments to the Constitution, and the creation of the Constitutional Proposals Committee.

CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION – PROPOSALS

The Committee considered a set of proposals for amendment to the Constitution, resulting from the annual review.

The Committee agreed to recommend to Full Council changes to the budget and policy framework, amendments to Article 13, and amendments to the Council's Scrutiny arrangements. Details of these amendments are set out in this issues 'Spotlight on...'.

CREATION OF A CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS COMMITTEE

CGA resolved to recommend that a Constitutional Proposals Committee should be set up to make recommendations to the Council about amendments to the Constitution. They also recommended that the membership should include all Leaders of political groups.

The membership of the new Committee is as follows:

- Councillor David Blackburn
- Councillor Judith Blake
- Councillor Andrew Carter (Chair)
- Councillor John Procter
- Councillor Richard Brett
- Councillor Sue Bentley
- Councillor Robert Finnigan
- Councillor Peter Gruen
- Councillor Neil Taggart
- Councillor Keith Wakefield

18th June 2008

Items to be considered on 18th June include:

- Annual Internal Audit Report;
- Annual Report on Risk Management;
- Annual Report on Project and Programme Assurance;
- Annual Audit and Inspection Plan;
- Annual Report of the Standards Committee; and
- Local Government Ombudsman Performance Report.

30th June 2008

Items to be considered on 30th June include:

- Corporate Governance Statement;
- Statement of Accounts;
- Joint Area Review (JAR) Report;
- Review of the effectiveness of the system of internal audit;
- Review of the effectiveness of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor John Bale (Chair)
Councillor Geoff Driver
Councillor Pauleen Grahame
Councillor Mohammed Iqbal
Councillor Graham Latty
Councillor Neil Taggart
Councillor David Blackburn
Councillor Colin Campbell
Councillor Graham Kirkland
Councillor Judith Elliott
Mike Wilkinson – Chair of the Standards Committee (non-voting)

Standards Committee

14th April 2008

The Committee approved the final draft of the Standards Committee Annual Report 2007/2008, and considered the results of the recent consultation on the Members' Code of Conduct.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2007/2008

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 be considered by the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee and Full Council at their first meetings of the new municipal year.

RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION ON THE ADDITION OF LOCAL PROVISIONS TO THE MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

Two suggestions were made for additions to the Members' Code of Conduct during the consultation period, and a third Councillor asked that the Code remain as it is.

One suggestion was that Members should be informed when a complaint is made against them. The Committee decided that this did not need to be added to the Code as it would be dealt with by the new arrangements for assessing complaints.

The second suggestion was that there should be protection for Members who are dealing with persistent or difficult complainants. The Committee decided to deal with this by means of a briefing note for Members, as refusal to correspond with a constituent is not necessarily a breach of the Code.

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1st July 2008

Items to be considered in July include:

- Approval of the final arrangements for the new local assessment process, including the creation of two sub-committees.
- A report regarding the Members' Induction Period and whether relevant deadlines were complied with.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Independent Members

Mike Wilkinson (Chair)
Rosemary Greaves
Philip Turnpenny

Parish Representatives

Councillor Mrs P Walker
Councillor J Priestley

Leeds City Councillors

Councillor C Campbell
Councillor J Elliott
Councillor E Nash
Councillor J L Carter
Green Group Member (tbc)

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 new process for dealing with complaints of misconduct made against Members.

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 50261 or email us at cxd.corporategovernance@leeds.gov.uk