

# Governance Matters



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Welcome to the March issue of Governance Matters.

Our regular in-depth feature 'Spotlight on...' focuses on partnership governance, and explains what the Council is doing to ensure that its partnerships have good governance arrangements in place.

We also take a look at what the governance committees have been doing since January, and at their busy schedule for their first meetings of the new calendar 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](mailto:cxd.corporategovernance@leeds.gov.uk)

## *Front Page News...*

### **Chair of Standards Committee Highlights Good Practice**

As reported in the November 2008 issue of Governance Matters, the Council has been shortlisted in the 'Standards and Ethics' category of the Local Government Chronicle Awards 2009. As a result of this, the Chair of the Standards Committee was invited to take part in a short film for the Standards Board for England's website, as an example of good practice. To view the film, please follow [this link](#).

### **Annual Review of the Constitution**

Each year the Council reviews its Constitution to ensure that it is up to date and fit for purpose. The reviewed Constitution will be re-issued after the Council's annual meeting in May.

As part of the review, Governance Services contacts relevant officers to find out whether there are any amendments needed to each section. Following this, proposed amendments to the Constitution are drafted. Members of General Purposes Committee then consider the proposals and make recommendations which will be considered at the Annual Council meeting.

If you would like more information on the Annual Review, or are aware of any amendments that may be needed, please contact the Corporate Governance Team.

## Spotlight on...

### Partnership governance

In November the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) approved a revised **Governance Framework for Significant Partnerships**. This Framework sets out:

- the steps which the Council should take before entering a partnership;
- the minimum governance requirements each partnership must have;
- how the Council will support the governance of each partnership; and
- how the Council monitors and reviews its involvement with each partnership.

A **register** setting out information about the significant partnerships the Council in which the Council is involved will be available on the intranet shortly.

In the next few months we will be asking lead officers for each partnership to review how their partnership complies with the requirements in the Framework.

To help Directors, lead officers and Members involved in partnerships in understanding the Framework, we have produced a **toolkit** which explains each of the requirements in more detail. The toolkit gives more background to the requirement, explains what it means in practice, and provides links to other useful documents.

Members of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee and the Corporate Governance Board have been consulted on the draft toolkit, and the final version will be launched by the end of the municipal year, in time to support Directors and lead officers in the review process. Training on the Framework and toolkit will be offered to all lead officers and Department Management teams.

#### CAUTION

It is the responsibility of Directors to ensure that their entries on the register of significant partnerships are up to date. The register must be updated within **28 days** of any changes becoming necessary.

#### JARGON BUSTER

Leeds City Council's defines a **partnership** as:  
"an agreement between two or more independent bodies to work collectively to achieve an objective, excluding:

- any contractual agreement, or
- any agreement to provide an organisation with grant aid,

Except where these arrangements create a separate decision-making structure."

This definition excludes PFI arrangements.

## Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

21<sup>st</sup> January 2009 and 11<sup>th</sup> February 2009

At its most recent meetings the Committee considered reports on Information Security and the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of Children's Services.

### INFORMATION SECURITY

At its meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> January, the Committee was informed of the actions taken in light of the Council's data loss incidents. The Committee was then presented with the findings, recommendations and associated action plans from the investigations undertaken into the two data loss incidents at its next meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> February.

Members agreed to note the reports, and to receive 6 monthly update reports on the action plans.

### CHILDREN'S SERVICES APA

The Committee considered the governance implications of Ofsted's Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services in Leeds, which was carried out in November 2008.

### 18<sup>th</sup> March 2009

Items to be considered in March include:

- Adult Social Services – Safeguarding Board and Risk Management Arrangements; and
- Leeds Joint Area Review Monitoring Report.

## General Purposes Committee

20<sup>th</sup> January 2009

The Committee met to consider reports on the Standards Committee Terms of Reference and the Membership of the Standards Committee.

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee agreed to recommend to full Council that alterations be made to the Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee and Corporate Governance & Audit Committee, in order to clarify the remit of the Committees in relation to responding (on behalf of the Council) to external consultations regarding conduct matters. Full Council approved this recommendation on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Members considered a report outlining several options to address issues relating to the current membership of the Standards Committee. It was resolved to recommend to full Council that the Standards Committee membership be increased to include two additional Leeds City Council Members, one additional Independent Member and one additional Parish and Town Council Member.

Full Council will consider this recommendation in April 2009.

### 28<sup>th</sup> April 2009

Items to be considered in April include:

- Polling District Review – Initial Proposals.

## Standards Committee

17<sup>th</sup> February 2009

The Committee met to consider reports on the administrative processes underpinning the local assessment arrangements and the Standards Committee Training Plan.

### ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES UNDERPINNING THE LOCAL ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the implementation of the changes agreed at the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2008, and some further options for Members to consider.

Members resolved to note the amendments agreed, and to conduct a further review of the local assessment procedure in September 2009. It was also agreed that minutes of Assessment and Review Sub-Committee meetings should be produced and published on the Council's website.

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE TRAINING PLAN

The Committee were asked to provide comments on and approve the amended Standards Committee training plan. The amendments included a suggestion that the Parish and Independent Members could attend as an observer at the ward surgeries of the Leeds City Council Members, in order to better understand the role of a City Councillor.

Members resolved to approve the amended training plan.

21<sup>st</sup> April 2009

Items to be considered in April include:

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- Final Standards Committee Annual Report 2008/09; and
- Standards Committee Procedure Rules.

## Corporate Governance Board

12<sup>th</sup> January and 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009

The Board received reports concerning the draft partnership governance toolkit; lessons learned from the procurement of the confidential waste disposal contract; the management of covert activities; and the Quarter 2 performance report.

Other items on the work programme of the Board include:

- Public Private Partnerships Unit governance arrangements;
- The register of significant partnerships;
- Arrangements for the appointment of Chief Officers;
- The draft 2009 Annual Governance Statement.

### 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 forthcoming new Code of Conduct for 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

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