

Governance Matters



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Issue 26

July 2010

Front Page News...

Welcome to the July issue of Governance Matters.

Our regular in-depth feature 'Spotlight on..' is taking a break this month, but it will be back next month looking at decision making and officer delegation schemes.

As always, we also take a look at what the governance committees have been doing over the past three 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

Standards for England

During the Queen's speech the coalition government announced a planned 'Decentralisation and Localism Bill' which proposes to abolish the Standards Board regime. It is not yet clear what this will mean, and the bill is not expected to be published until the Autumn. In the meantime the Members' Code of Conduct, Standards for England and the Standards Committee remain in place.

Standards Committee Annual Report

The Standards Committee Annual Report has now been completed and will be published on the [Leeds City Council website](#) after being received by Corporate Governance and Audit Committee and Full Council. The report provides an interesting insight into the work of the Committee, including their plans for the new municipal year.

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report

The Corporate Governance and Audit Committee has produced its Annual Report for 2009/10, and it will be available to download from the Leeds City Council website soon. The report summarises the Committee's achievements in the previous municipal year and their future plans.

Constitution Amendments

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

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

As a result of the local elections and the Annual Meeting there were some changes to the Committee membership. The Council appointed [Councillor Geoffrey Driver](#) to the position of Chair.

23rd June and 30th June 2010

The Committee received KPMG reports on Grants and Returns in 2008/09 and the Financial Statements Audit Plan. Also received were The Statement of Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and Decision Making Arrangements in Licensing.

THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2009/10

The Committee received a report which introduced the 2009/10 Statement of Accounts for Leeds City Council.

Specific questions were asked about the Council's debt position, payment of creditors and the pensions deficit.

The report recommended that the Committee approve the 2009/10 Statement of Accounts and agree that the Chair acknowledge approval on behalf of the Committee by signing the appropriate section within the Statement of Responsibilities of the accounts.

The Committee resolved that a report should be submitted to a future meeting detailing the follow-up work undertaken as a result of the report and that the Chair should raise the Committee's concerns regarding the outcome of the report with Executive Board and senior officers.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Committee received a report which provided Members with an introduction and commentary to the Council's interim annual Governance Statement for 2010.

Members discussed the need to maximise the benefits of the good control environment the Council has in place.

The Committee resolved to approve the interim Annual Governance Statement in order that it can be included within the annual accounts and to update the Statement as appropriate before the final Statement is presented in September.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Geoff Driver - Chair
Councillor Pauleen Grahame
Councillor Alison Lowe
Councillor Ted Hanley
Councillor James Lewis
Councillor Bill Hyde
Councillor Steve Smith
Councillor Peter Harrand
Councillor Neil Taggart
Councillor David Blackburn
Councillor Colin Campbell
Councillor Graham Kirkland
Councillor Judith Elliot
Mr. Gordon Tollefson – (Chair of the Standards Committee (non-voting))

15th July 2010

Items to be considered on 30th June include:

- Local Government Ombudsman Annual Letter 2010/11
- Annual Internal Audit report
- Governance of significant Partnerships

Standards Committee

22nd April 2010

The Committee approved the Standards Committee Annual Report 2009/10, and considered the annual review of the Standards Committee Procedure Rules.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

The Standards Committee approved its annual report, subject to any amendments suggested at the 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.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE PROCEDURE RULES

The Committee considered proposed amendments to its Procedure Rules, in light of any issues that had arisen throughout the year.

When a complaint about a Member is referred to the Hearings Sub-Committee for determination, the subject Member and the Investigator have to complete a pre-hearing form to assist with preparations for the hearing. The Committee particularly discussed the timescales that should be set for these forms to be returned.

The Committee agreed that the subject Member and the investigator should be given 5 days to return the form, with a potential extension of 5 days for the subject Member. However, the Committee also decided that this decision should be kept under review and the timescales amended if they cause any difficulties.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE TRAINING PROGRAMME

The Committee considered an update report on its training plan, which sought to address some outstanding issues and concerns raised by members of the Committee at its meeting on 17th February 2010.

The Committee resolved to adopt the amended training plan, and recommend to General Purposes Committee that the elements to be completed before a member sits on a Sub-Committee are made compulsory.

13th July 2010

Items to be considered in July include:

- Politically Restricted Posts; and
- Review of the Procedure for Standards Committee Hearings.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Independent Members

Mr. Gordon Tollefson (Chair)
Ms. Rosemary Greaves
Mr. Philip Turnpenny
Mrs. Joanne Austin

Parish Representatives

Councillor Mrs P Walker
Councillor J Priestley
Councillor P Cook

Leeds City Councillors

Councillor C Campbell
Councillor B Gettings
Councillor J Harper
Councillor B Selby
Councillor E Nash
Councillor R D Feldman
Councillor J L Carter

Corporate Governance Board

29th April and 10th June 2010

The Board considered reports on:

- Politically Restricted Posts which set out the background of work done in early 2010 to update to Council's list of politically restricted posts;
- The annual review of the register of significant partnerships, the Board were asked to consider whether any further action is required in respect of the possible omissions from the register;
- The draft Annual Governance Statement; and
- Money Laundering Monitoring, which informed the Board on progress made.

Items on the work programme for forthcoming meetings include:

- Lessons learned from the Annual Governance Statement process, including assurance templates;
- Annual review of Partnerships; and
- Good Conduct and Behaviour: review of the suite of Local Codes and Protocols.

In July the Board will also be holding a special workshop session to look at the reasons behind the weaknesses in the control framework of Children's Services. Board Members will impart knowledge held within their Directorates which will aim to create an Assurance framework for

Children's Services to use in the future.

General Purposes Committee

18th May & 28th June 2010

In May, the Committee approved various amendments to the Constitution following the Annual Review of the Constitution.

At the June meeting the Committee received a report proposing to merge licensing governance arrangements.

LICENSING GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Members particularly discussed the proposed rationalisation of licensing arrangements and highlighted the potential efficiency savings created by the merger of the Licensing Committee and Licensing and Regulatory Panel specifically in relation to the reduction to only one Chair and one Chair's allowance. Members resolved to recommend that full Council merge the Licensing Committee and Licensing Regulatory Panel.

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 decision making and officer delegation schemes.

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