

Welcome to the December issue of Governance Matters.

Our regular in-depth feature 'Spotlight on..' focuses on the Localism Bill and its potential implications for the Council.

We also take a look at what the governance committees have been doing over the last few months.

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...

Governance Framework for Significant Partnerships – re-issue as an advisory note

The Governance Framework for Significant Partnerships was recently reviewed, in light of the current economic climate and the current resource constraints faced by the Council. The review showed that the Framework has helped to mitigate some of the risks associated with working in partnership, however the monitoring process was seen to have placed an administrative burden on directorates which was not proportionate to the management of the risk.

Therefore, after consultation with Corporate Governance Board and Corporate Leadership Team, the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) took a delegated decision to re-issue the Framework as guidance only (in the form of an Advisory Note on Partnership Governance).

A register of partnerships will continue to be maintained, and will be compiled from decisions to enter into a partnership made by full Council, Executive Board or through delegated decisions made by officers (limited to Key and Major decisions only).

A copy of the Advisory Note, register of partnerships and Toolkit for Partnership Governance are available to download from the partnership governance page on the [intranet](#).

Spotlight on...

Localism Bill

The Localism Bill was introduced to Parliament on 13th December 2010. The Bill will have to go through several stages until it reaches its final form. For more information about the stages of a bill, please visit the [Parliament website](#).

Effect on the Council's governance arrangements

The Localism Bill proposes to end the **Standards Board regime**. This means that the Members' Code of Conduct, the general principles of public life, Standards for England (the national regulator) and the First-Tier Tribunal (which hears the most serious complaints) will cease to exist. There will also no longer be a requirement for the Council to have a Standards Committee.

Instead the Bill proposes to allow councils to devise their own standards regimes, including adopting their own voluntary code of conduct and deciding what action to take in relation to complaints that a Councillor has breached the voluntary code. However, councils will not be able to impose sanctions which interfere with a Councillor's ability to carry out their duties, such as disqualification or suspension.

It is proposed that Regulations will impose requirements on Councillors to register their financial and other interests, to declare these interests in meetings, and in certain circumstances, to prevent them from taking part in decisions which relate to their interests. Failure to comply with the Regulations will be a criminal offence for which a Member may face a fine of up to £5,000 upon conviction, and disqualification from being a Councillor for up to five years.

The Bill clarifies the **predetermination rules**, and sets out that if a Councillor has campaigned on an issue or made public statements about their approach to a matter, he or she will still be able to participate in the discussion and vote on that issue.

The Bill provides for the 12 largest cities in England (including Leeds) to have **elected mayors** from 2012, subject to a referendum. Through an Order, the Government proposes to make the Leaders of these cities into 'shadow mayors' with the powers available to existing mayors, after the Bill has received Royal Assent. If the public of Leeds vote to have an elected mayor in May 2012, then mayoral elections will take place in May 2013. Mayors will be elected for four year terms and will have additional powers over and above those of a council Leader which are yet to be announced.

Further information

The Localism Bill is due to receive Royal Assent at the end of 2011, and the proposed changes to the standards regime are expected to come into force a few months later. We will keep you updated on the changes in Leeds, but for now please visit the [Communities and Local Government website](#) for more information.

JARGON BUSTER

An **elected mayor** is similar to the Leader of the Council, but is directly elected by the public as opposed to being chosen by full Council. An elected mayor would select the Executive Members and be the Chair of the Executive Board. The **Lord Mayor** of Leeds is a ceremonial position given to a different Councillor each municipal year. This role is non-political. The Lord Mayor is the Chair for full Council meetings and is the 'First Citizen' of Leeds.

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

**29th July, 29th September,
15th November and 14th
December 2010**

The Committee has considered reports on the Annual Internal Audit Report 2009/10, the audited Statement of Accounts and Value for Money Assessment 2009/10, and the Comprehensive Spending Review.

ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2009/10

The Committee received a report highlighting the issues raised by Internal Audit in its annual report for 2009/10, and approved the proposed Internal Audit Plan for 2010/11.

Members resolved to request that a report is submitted providing details on the cost of Internal Audit to the Council, and further information on the value added to the Council by the section through its value for money work.

AUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT 2009/10

The Committee approved the audited Statement of Accounts and noted the two recommendations which had been made by the auditors, which would need to be actioned when compiling next year's accounts:

- A review of all items in the asset register which have not been revalued recently in order to ensure that all recorded assets are still owned by the Council; and
- An improvement in the process for ensuring that all valuations are correctly recorded in the asset register.

COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW

The Committee received a report regarding the implications of the comprehensive spending review which was announced on 20th October 2010.

The Committee resolved to continue to review and monitor as appropriate the changes that take place following the spending review.

24th January 2011

Items to be considered in January include:

- Leeds Initiative Partnership and City Planning Framework.

General Purposes Committee

**6th September, 23rd September
and 5th November 2010**

The Committee considered items on the introduction of a performance related pay (PRP) scheme for refuse collectors and proposed amendments to the Constitution.

PRP SCHEME

The Committee received a report which set out proposals for the introduction of a PRP scheme for refuse collectors.

Members agreed the introduction of a PRP scheme for refuse collectors and authorised the Director of Resources to finalise negotiations with the Trade Unions in order to enter into a collective agreement to bring it into effect.

17th January 2011

Items to be considered in January include:

- Amendment to the Planning Framework.

Standards Committee

13th July 2010

The Committee considered reports on the review of the procedure for Standards Committee hearings, and proposed amendments to the local assessment process.

REVIEW OF THE PROCEDURE FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE HEARINGS

The Committee considered some proposed amendments to the procedure for Standards Committee hearings, following two recent Hearings Sub-Committee meetings and the feedback received.

The Committee agreed with the proposed amendments, which included clarifying the pre-hearing forms and creating a plain English guide to investigations for Members.

OPTIONS FOR AMENDMENT TO THE LOCAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The Committee received a report considering amendments to the local assessment process in Leeds, including the way that complaints are handled prior to being presented to the Assessment Sub-Committee.

The Committee approved the proposals, including introducing the option of informal resolution at the time the complaint is submitted by asking the complainant to indicate their agreement with it on the complaints form, and to specify a form of resolution that would satisfy them, e.g. an apology.

16th February 2011

Items to be considered in February include:

- Impact of the Localism Bill on the Standards regime and potential options for the authority.

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Corporate Governance Board

15th July, 9th September, 7th October, 4th November and 9th December 2010

The Board received reports concerning:

- Lessons learned in relation to governance arrangements following the external inspection report on Children's Services;
- Annual Governance Statement 2010;
- Review of Governance Framework for Significant Partnerships; and
- Governance Performance Dashboard.

At the meeting held on 9th December, the Board reviewed its Terms of Reference. In light of the current economic climate, it was agreed that a smaller Board, composed of officers with responsibility for managing the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, should continue to meet but on a much less frequent basis. Reports will be requested from key governance officers as required.

THE NEXT ISSUE OF GOVERNANCE MATTERS

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

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