

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

Monday, 29th September, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor J Bale in the Chair
Councillors D Blackburn, G Driver, J Elliott,
P Grahame, M Iqbal, G Latty, N Taggart
and C Campbell

Co-optee Mr M Wilkinson

30 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed Mrs Anne Seex, the Local Government Ombudsman to the meeting. The Chair also made reference to his recent attendance, with the Chief Officer (Audit and Risk) at a Core Cities meeting of Audit Committee Chairs and Audit Chief Officers.

31 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

32 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no resolutions to exclude the public.

33 Late Items

There were no late items added to the agenda.

34 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations made at this point, however Councillor Driver declared a personal interest during consideration of the item in relation to the External Audit and Publication of the Accounts 2007/08 (minute 41 refers).

35 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 30th June 2008

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meeting held on 30th June 2008 be approved as a correct record.

36 Matters Arising

Further to minute 24 (Annual Report on Risk Management Arrangements 2007/08) it was noted that:

- (a) A meeting is in the process of being scheduled with the Leader of Council to discuss Governance issues emerging from the Committee's work programme
- (b) Work was currently in progress to establish a Business Continuity Management Plan for Eastmoor Secure Unit and further updates would be submitted to this Committee.

Councillor Iqbal arrived at 2.05 pm

37 Minutes of the Standards Committee

RESOLVED – Members resolved to note the minutes of the Standards Committee meetings held on 1st July and 14th July 2008.

Councillor Elliott arrived at 2.10 pm prior to the commencement of the item and Councillor Taggart arrived at 2.25 pm during consideration of the item.

38 Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter 2007/08

The Corporate Customer Relations Manager submitted a report discussing the findings of the Local Government Ombudsman's (LGO) Annual Letter, a copy of which was appended to the report, and considering what service or performance improvement may be required.

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), Anne Seex, was present at the meeting to comment on the letter and respond to any questions from Members.

Members had a detailed discussion with the LGO particularly in relation to:

- (a) The improved quality of responses provided by this authority
- (b) The reduced number of complaints received by Leeds City Council
- (c) The process for dealing with premature complaints
- (d) The relationship between the LGO and Standards Committee

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the performance information and issues raised within the report be noted.
- (b) That the Head of Governance Services liaise the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development with a view to raising with Scrutiny Board Chairs the use of information contained in the Ombudsman's Annual Letter to identify possible areas of scrutiny.

39 Local Government Ombudsman Performance Report: 1st May 2008 - 31st July 2008

The Corporate Customer Relations Manager submitted a report updating Members on complaints received from the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) for the period May to June 2008 and considering the performance information and any issues raised within the report.

The Local Government Ombudsman was also present for this item.

Members noted that the number of complaints were down compared to last year and that there was a significantly improved response time due to the response times on Education Leeds cases received during this period.

RESOLVED – That the performance information in relation to Ombudsman complaints and the response times in relation to Education Leeds complaints be noted.

40 Comprehensive Area Assessment - Use of Resources 2009 Self Assessment

Further to minute 94 of the meeting held on the 19th March 2008 the Director of Resources submitted a report summarising the results of the self assessment and providing a mechanism by which members can monitor and support the Council's progress towards achieving a satisfactory outcome for the Use of Resources Assessment in 2009.

Members noted that a number of recent officer workshops had been held and these had identified areas where the Council were already in a strong position. Members felt that it would be helpful if Members were involved in future workshops, where appropriate.

Members also noted that there were some areas that will require a great deal of work to achieve the necessary standard by the end of 2008/09 particularly in relation to:

- establishing a corporate approach to value for money and the generation of efficiencies
- partnerships
- involvement of stakeholders in commissioning
- the ability to effectively link finance, performance and risk information for both officers and members
- ensuring systems are in place to secure data

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the results of the self assessment be noted.
- (b) That a further report on this matter be submitted to the January 2009 meeting of the Committee
- (c) That officers note the views of this Committee in respect of Member involvement in any future Use of Resources workshops.

41 External Audit and Publication of the Accounts 2007/08

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Members of amendments to the approved accounts which have been agreed with the Council's external auditors.

Adrian Lythgo and Alison Ormston from KPMG were present.

Members noted the comments in relation to charitable donations, schools in deficit, bad debt provision and the technical adjustment in respect of the treatment of premiums and discounts held on the balance sheet from previous debt rescheduling.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report of the Council's external auditors on the 2007/08 accounts be received and the amendment made to the accounts noted.
- (b) That on the basis of assurances received it was agreed that the Chair sign the management representation letter on behalf of the Committee.

(Councillor Driver declared a personal interest during discussion of this item as a Governor of South Leeds High School)

42 Work Programme

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report notifying Members of the draft work programme for 2008/09.

RESOLVED – That the draft work programme for the remainder of the municipal year be noted.