

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

Wednesday, 16th May, 2007

PRESENT: Councillor A Carter in the Chair
Councillors D Blackburn, R Finnigan,
M Harris, E Minkin and K Wakefield
Co-optee Mike Wilkinson

Apologies Councillors

83 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents in accordance with Procedure Rule 25 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules.

84 Exclusion of Public

There were no resolutions to exclude the public.

85 Late Items

The Clerk advised Members that all the reports on the agenda were admitted as late items.

The Chair indicated that, in accordance with his powers under the Local Government Act 1972, he had agreed to accept for inclusion on the agenda all the reports as late items. The reports were not available at the time of agenda despatch and required urgent consideration by reason of the fact that they relate to the governance of the authority for the coming municipal year and therefore required consideration by the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee prior to their consideration at the Annual Meeting of Council on the 24th May 2007.

86 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of personal/prejudicial interest for the purpose of section 81(3) of the Local Government Act 2000 and paragraphs 9 to 12 of the Members' Code of Conduct.

87 Amendments to Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report recommending the introduction of a new Scrutiny Board Procedure Rule to acknowledge that Scrutiny Boards on occasions undertake reviews outside the formal Scrutiny Inquiry process which may result in the publication of observations and recommendations.

RESOLVED – Members resolved to recommend to Council the following amendment to the Constitution:

- the introduction of a new Scrutiny Board Procedure Rule acknowledging that Scrutiny Boards on occasions undertake reviews outside of the formal Scrutiny Inquiry process which may result in the publication of observations and recommendations, as set out in paragraph 3.4 and detailed in appendix 1 to the report.

88 Overview and Scrutiny - Proposed Amendments to Terms of Reference

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report setting out a recommendation in respect of amendments to the Overview and Scrutiny function following an annual review.

RESOLVED – Members resolved to recommend to Council that the constitutional amendments to give effect to the redesign of the Overview and Scrutiny Function, as detailed in option 1 and in appendices 1 and 2 to the report, be approved.

89 Governance of Plans Panels

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) and the Chief Officer (Planning Services) submitted a joint report considering the options for governing the membership of Plans Panels.

Councillors expressed their support for the proposals in the report, although requested that a number of further issues are considered during the forthcoming year, including:

- the geographical coverage of the existing plans panels;
- clarification of the nature of pre-application discussions; and
- site visits.

RESOLVED – Members resolved to recommend to Council that Article 8 of the Constitution is amended to

- a) Stipulate that the membership of Plans Panels should comprise no less than 7 and no more than 11 members of the Council.
- b) Stipulate that the completion of compulsory prescribed training is a prerequisite to any Member sitting as a Plans Panel Member¹.

¹ As per approvals given by the Standards Committee to amend the Code of Practice for the Determination of planning Matters.

Members also resolved to request the Standards Committee to review the Code of Practice for Determining Planning Applications with a view to the code stipulating that only those Members who have attended the site visit and have been present throughout the whole consideration of an application at the Plans Panel shall be entitled to determine the application.

(Councillor David Blackburn joined the meeting during discussion of this item)

90 Proposed Amendments to Council Procedure Rules

The Chief Democratic Services Officer submitted a report proposing amendments to the manner in which Council meetings are conducted with a view to securing conclusion of the meetings by no later than 7.20pm.

RESOLVED – Members resolved to recommend to Council that the amended Council Procedure Rules as appended to the report be adopted, subject to an amendment that the Council meeting shall commence at 1.30pm.

91 Proposed Changes to the Constitution Regarding the Governance Arrangements for the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report presenting to the Committee proposed changes concerning the membership of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee.

Members particularly discussed the impact of the proposal, to preclude Leaders and Whips from the membership of the Committee, on smaller political groups (the Greens and the Morley Borough Independents) and the question of who should Chair the Committee.

Members were minded to recommend to Council the approval of an amendment to Article 9 of the Constitution, as set out in the report, with the exception that Group Leader's and Whips from the Green Party and the Morley Borough Independent Party² may serve on the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee.

RESOLVED – Members resolved to recommend to Council to amend Article 9 of the Constitution to preclude members of the Executive; and Political Group Leaders and Whips from the administration and the major opposition Group from being members of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee.

² Other than those who are Members of the Executive Board.