

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

Monday, 14th January, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor J Bale in the Chair
Councillors D Blackburn, E Minkin,
C Campbell, G Driver and B Gettings
Co-optee Mike Wilkinson

Apologies None

57 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

58 Exclusion of Public

There were no resolutions to exclude the public.

59 Late Items

There were no late items submitted to the agenda for consideration.

60 Declaration of Interests

Councillor Driver declared a personal interest in Item 8 (minute 64), the half-year internal audit report, due to his membership of the board of Aire Valley Homes and that he is a Governor of South Leeds High School.

61 Minutes

Members discussed Minute 48 in relation to significant partnerships. In particular:

- that the Scrutiny Boards should be made aware of this work; and
- that scrutiny be a key part of the governance required by the Council's significant partnerships.

Members also discussed Minute 52 in relation to the Council's risk management arrangements and reiterated their view that consideration needs to be given to publication, in some form, of the Council's corporate risk register.

RESOLVED - Members resolved:

- that the minutes of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meeting held on the 28th November 2007 be approved as a correct record, subject to an amendment to Minute 48 to remove an additional 'the'; and
- that the Executive Board be asked to consider publication, in some form, of the Council's corporate risk register, taking into account the principle that information should be available and accessible to the public to ensure transparent governance.

62 Minutes of the Standards Committee

RESOLVED - Members resolved to:

- note the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on the 5th December; and
- express their support for the Committee's decision to write to the Minister for Communities and Local Government regarding the delay in the publication of the national officer code of conduct.

63 Standards Committee half year progress report

Members particularly discussed:

- Parish Councillors' knowledge of the new Members' Code of Conduct and their obligations within the new code; and
- officer decision making.

RESOLVED – Members resolved to note the report.

64 Half-Year Internal Audit Report

Members particularly discussed the issues raised in the report in relation to Aire Valley Homes Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO). Officers reported that it is less likely that the ALMO will have an independent internal audit function in place for this financial year.

Members expressed the view that the ongoing work on the governance of grants to voluntary organisations should capture grants awarded by Area Committees.

Finally, in response to a question regarding the National Fraud Initiative, the Committee was updated on the actions that have been taken by Leeds City Council following the loss of data by other national bodies.

RESOLVED – Members resolved to:

- express their concern at the failure of Aire Valley Homes to implement internal audit, which has been identified as a risk to Leeds City Council and to request an urgent report back to the Committee from the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) and the Director Environment and Neighbourhoods regarding this matter;
- request a report outlining the management / governance arrangements which are in place for all the ALMOs and other relevant arms lengths organisations; and

- request that consideration is given to whether loss of data is a significant corporate risk.

65 Update on 'Delivering Successful Change'

Members were particularly interested in how far the Delivering Successful Change (DSC) methodology has been implemented across the Council. The proposed Corporate Programme Management function will in future be able to provide assurance regarding implementation. The use of the DSC methodology is now compulsory for any new projects, as defined by the DSC methodology.

Members also sought assurance that the need to keep relevant Elected Members apprised of the development and implementation of projects is built into the methodology. The stakeholder communication plan should ensure this.

RESOLVED – Members resolved to:

- note the further progress of the project and the links between DSC and the evolving Council Change Programme;
- support the requirement for officers involved in project management to adhere to Council policy and the corporate approaches and ensure that projects are subject to appropriate project assurance;
- support the request to task senior management with the responsibility for overseeing the use of DSC within directorates;
- continue to receive quarterly reports from the DSC projects, with the next report providing some evidence of the implementation of DSC; and
- receive the programme management methodology for consultation.

66 The Corporate Governance Statement Action Plan

Members discussed progress on achieving improvements identified within the 2007 Corporate Governance Statement.

Members also discussed the request of the Leader of Council that the Elected Members of the Committee be asked to form an Elected Member Constitution Working Group to develop proposals for Constitutional change. This work will be informed by a diagnostic exercise undertaken by the Deputy Chief Executive and the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance), following a resolution of Full Council in June 2007.

RESOLVED – Members resolved to:

- note the work officers have undertaken to improve the Council's corporate governance arrangements;
- agree the proposals for improving the action plan;
- request an update in the next regular risk management report regarding the implementation of business continuity plans; and

- establish an Elected Member working group, made up of the Elected Members on the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, to formulate proposals for Constitutional change.

67 Knowledge Specification for Corporate Governance and Audit Committee Members

Members discussed a number of general issues in relation to Member development, in particular:

- the skills and knowledge, generally, that Councillors require;
- Member induction; and
- developing a career as a Councillor .

RESOLVED – Members resolved to:

- agree the knowledge specification attached at appendix one to the report, with the addition of a requirement to understand the relationship between the CGA and Standards Committee;
- undertake a self-assessment against the specification; and
- forward the specification to Group Whips, to take into consideration when making nominations to the Committee.

68 Work Programme

RESOLVED – Members resolved to request that an additional meeting be arranged for March to consider appropriate unscheduled items, any additional items arising from this meeting, and / or items deferred from the February meeting.