

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

Tuesday, 15th December, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor J Bale in the Chair
Councillors D Blackburn, G Driver,
P Grahame, G Latty, C Campbell,
T Leadley and A Lowe

Co-optee
Mr M Wilkinson

Apologies Councillors N Taggart and G Kirkland

58 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

59 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no resolutions to exclude the public.

60 Late Items

There were no late items to add to the agenda. However, the Chair noted that supplementary information had been circulated in relation to Item 7 of the agenda (minute 64 refers).

Appendices 1 and 2 to this report had been unavailable at the time of the agenda dispatch due to an embargo being in place over the Appendices until the 9th December, and were required for Members to be able to effectively consider the report.

61 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were declared.

62 Apologies For Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Kirkland and Taggart.

63 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – The minutes of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meeting held on 12th November 2009 were approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Minutes approved as a correct record
At the meeting held on 13th January 2010

Minute 54 – amend the sentence under ‘Members particularly discussed’ to read ‘The democratic accountability of the Leeds City Region, which gives no opportunity for elected Members to scrutinise decisions made;’

64 Outcome of the Comprehensive Area Assessment

The Head of Policy (Performance and Improvement) presented a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Planning Policy and Improvement). The report informed Members of the results of the Organisational and Area assessment report for Leeds and how the assessment is undertaken.

Members particularly discussed:

- The identification of emerging areas of difficulty and how they will be focussed upon;
- The repetitive nature of the report produced for the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and the lack of evidence contained within;
- How the Ofsted inspection feeds into the CAA and its subsequent influence on the CAA;
- Whether any of the areas for improvement had been anticipated by the Council prior to the inspection, and if so, whether action had been taken to rectify these issues before the inspection took place, and if not why the governance arrangements had not alerted the Council to the areas of poor performance.

RESOLVED – Members resolved to:

- (a) Note the contents of the report.

(Councillor Campbell entered the meeting at 2:15pm during the consideration of this item)

65 The Changing Financial Landscape

The Chief Officer (Financial Management) presented a report of the Director of Resources informing the Committee of the Council’s approach to medium term financial planning and management, particularly within the context of the financial challenges facing the public sector in general and specifically the City Council.

Members particularly discussed:

- The possibility of Central Government ring fencing the budgets of certain publicly funded organisations, leading to pressure on Local Government finances;
- The issue of certain areas of the City Council’s budget being ring fenced and the effects of this; and
- That the report was well presented and informative.

RESOLVED – Members resolved:

- (a) To note the contents of the report and agree that the financial planning arrangements in place are fit for purpose; and
- (b) That the Chair make arrangements for the report to be sent to every Member of the Council prior to the full Council meeting in February 2010 to discuss the Council's budget.

66 Code of Corporate Governance

The Senior Corporate Governance Officer presented a report of the Assistant Chief Executive(Corporate Governance) advising Members of proposed amendments to the Code of Corporate Governance.

Members particularly discussed:

- The requirement for 2 minor changes;
 - (1) To include the 'Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Framework' in the list of documents the Council will establish and keep under review to ensure it collects, uses and stores information and data appropriately, in accordance with Principle 4 of the Code.
 - (2) To add in the word 'devising' to the second paragraph of the introduction so the second sentence reads 'By applying the principles in this Code the Council commits itself to devising and delivering services to the citizens of Leeds...'.
- Publicising the Code of Corporate Governance more widely to make citizens more aware of the Governance arrangements at the Council and the processes the Council have in place make a difference; and
- That the public expects the Council to conduct its business appropriately.

RESOLVED – Members resolved to:

- (a) Approve the revised Code of Corporate Governance contained at Appendix 1 subject to the proposed amendments outlined above, and any amendments of a minor nature proposed by the Standards Committee.

67 Corporate Governance Statement 2009/10 Action Plan

The Corporate Governance Officer presented a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) updating Members on the progress made in implementing the Corporate Governance Statement Action Plan and asking the Committee to approve amendments to some of the Improvement Activities in the Action Plan.

Members particularly discussed:

- How the new improvement activities inserted had been identified for inclusion in the Action Plan; and
- That the language used in the Action Plan should be improved to make it more understandable.

RESOLVED – Members resolved to approve the changes made to Improvement Activities in the Action Plan.

68 Work Programme

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report notifying Members of the draft work programme for 2009/10.

In discussing the work programme Members requested the January work programme be reduced due to a large number of items being on the agenda.

Members also requested that a report be submitted to the Committee following the Children's Services Review in February.