

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

Tuesday, 14th December, 2010

PRESENT: Councillor G Driver in the Chair
Councillors C Campbell, G Kirkland,
A Lowe, Tollefson, J Elliott, P Harrand,
J Lewis, T Hanley and C Fox (as substitute
for W.Hyde)

Co-optee G. Tollefson

Apologies Councillors N Taggart and W Hyde

65 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

66 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no resolutions to exclude the public.

67 Late Items

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

68 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made.

69 Apologies For Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor W. Hyde and Councillor N. Taggart.

70 Minutes of The Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meeting held on 15th November 2010 were approved as a correct record.

71 Matters Arising

Duplicate Creditor Payments (Minute No. 60)

In response to a request made by the Committee at the previous meeting The Head of Internal Audit circulated information which provided details of the Directorates in which duplicate payments had been made and the amounts.

72 Leeds City Region

The Head of Regeneration Policy and Planning and Jobs and Skills presented a report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods. The report provided an overview of how the Council inputs and affects the employment and Skills and Housing and Regeneration agendas, within the context of the Leeds City Region.

The Committee discussed the report in detail, highlighting that their concerns for the Leeds City Region centred around the transparency of and democratic access to the organisation.

Members also commented at the apparent lack of private sector involvement in the Leeds City Region Housing and Regeneration Board and that ideally the public sector and the private sector should be involved in both the Housing and Regeneration Board and the Employment and Skills Board.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved to:

- (a) note the report and the progress made; and
- (b) request a report on the governance arrangements for the new Local Enterprise Partnership specifically exploring governance issues contained within the partnership governance toolkit.

73 Information relating to significant legal cases

The Chief Officer (Legal, Licensing and Registration) presented a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) which proposed arrangements for informing relevant Members of significant legal cases involving the authority.

Members discussed the proposals highlighted in the report in detail and raised the importance of Financial Management being made aware of cases which could have a significant impact on the Council's budget provisions.

In light of the Technoprint Plc and Snee V Leeds City Council, Members stressed the importance of increasing the amount of officer contact with the relevant Executive Board Member with regards to significant legal cases. This should include high value cases, but also, low value multiple cases, with the aim to make Members more aware of the litigation faced by the Council.

Members also discussed amending the proposed arrangements featured within the report, which they considered should emphasise the reporting of cases to the relevant Executive Board Member which are of major public concern.

Finally Members agreed that there should be a system introduced at the Council whereby Members can be informed of claims made against the Council be they legal claims or any other claim which might affect the budget or reputation.

RESOLVED - The Committee resolved to:

- (a) request that the proposed arrangements for informing Members of significant legal cases be amended as discussed;
- (b) request a report detailing the types and values of cases which are currently ongoing against the Council; and
- (c) request a report detailing the general arrangements for oversight of claims against the Council (including legal claims, insurance claims,) including how each Directorate considers and minimises the risk of repeat claims being made.

74 Security Arrangements for PDA Devices

The Project Manager (Planning, Policy and Improvement) presented a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy, Planning and Improvement) detailing the security arrangements the Council has in place for PDA devices issued by the Council.

Members discussed the report and gained assurance that sensitive information relating to Members case work was safe on PDAs and would be impossible to access if the PDA was lost or stolen.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved to note the contents of the report.

75 Report on Governance of the Complaints Process - 2010

The Corporate Customer Relations Manager presented a report of the Chief Customer Services Officer. The report provided further information to the Committee as to the resourcing of the complaints function on a corporate and Council wide basis.

Members discussed the figures contained within the report with the Corporate Customer Relations Manager and congratulated her on presenting an informative report which was of particular value to the committee's considerations.

RESOLVED - The Committee resolved to note the report and acknowledge the ongoing improvements in performance and good feedback on the same from the Local Government Ombudsman.

76 Protecting the Public Purse - 2010

The Chief Officer (Audit and Risk) presented a report of the Director of Resources which formed a self assessment of the authority's position against the recommended best practice in the Audit Commission's 'Protecting the Public Purse 2010' report and proposed actions to address areas where further work could be done to address the risk of fraud and corruption.

The Committee discussed the report and re-iterated the need to continue to focus on reducing fraud committed against the Council by collaborating with other local authorities and contributing to the National Fraud Initiative.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved to note the assurance provided by Internal Audit regarding our arrangements to meet the best practice detailed in Protecting the Public Purse 2010 and support the continued efforts to develop the anti – fraud culture at the authority.

77 Work Programme

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report notifying Members of the draft work programme for 2010/11.

Members discussed the importance of reviewing how risk management at the Council was being conducted in light of the budget cuts faced by the Council.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved to:

- (a) note the draft work programme for the remainder of 2010/11;
- (b) note that there will be a risk management briefing before the commencement of business at the next meeting of the Committee on 24th January 2011; and
- (c) request regular reports to consider the implications for the control environment at the Council in light of budget cuts.