

**Report of Director of Resources**

**Report to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee**

**Date: 18<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

**Subject: Report writing guidance and template**

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**Does the report contain information which has been identified as confidential or exempt?**

**Yes** (if exempt, please see the public interest test in section 4)  
Relevant section of the report: n/a  
In accordance with Access to Information Procedure Rule: n/a

**No**, this report does not contain information identified as confidential or exempt.

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**Is the decision eligible for call-in?**     **Yes**         **No – exempt**         **Not applicable**

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**Summary of main issues and corporate governance considerations**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek comments from the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee on the revised report writing guidance and template, attached as Appendix 1. It is proposed that this revised guidance and template comes into effect from the start of the 2011/12 municipal year.
2. The current report writing guidance was initially produced on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2006, and was last revised in March 2010. Therefore it is timely to conduct a thorough review of the guidance to ensure it is fit for purpose and reflects the Council's current decision making procedures.
3. As a result of this review the guidance has been amended to more closely reflect the decision making requirements in the Constitution and to focus on the current risk areas to the Council's decision making, such as equality and diversity and cohesion and integration.

**Recommendations**

4. Members are asked to comment on the revised report writing guidance and template attached as Appendix 1.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek comments from the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee on the revised report writing guidance and template, attached as Appendix 1. It is proposed that this revised guidance and template comes into effect from the start of the 2011/12 municipal year.
- 1.2 To illustrate this, this report has been produced as an example of the proposed new template.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 The current report writing guidance was initially produced on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2006, and was last revised in March 2010. Therefore it is timely to conduct a thorough review of the guidance to ensure that it is fit for purpose and reflects the Council's current decision making procedures.
- 2.2 As a result of this review the guidance has been amended to more closely reflect the decision making requirements in the Constitution and to focus on the current risk areas to the Council's decision making, such as equality and diversity and cohesion and integration.

## **3 Main issues**

### **3.1 The proposed report template**

- 3.1.1 Under the revised guidance it is proposed that there be one template for reports to Council Committees (save for those referred to in paragraph 4.9.2). It is also proposed that all delegated decision reports to officers be on the revised template.
- 3.1.2 The new template prompts report authors to include all the relevant information about the issue under consideration, especially the main risks and corporate governance implications associated with the decision.
- 3.1.3 The report author is now prompted to provide the following details in relation to the issue:
  - Any risks associated with the issue under consideration and how these will be managed
  - If the report is exempt, why it is in the public interest to maintain the exemption
  - If the issue is a key decision, whether it has been included on the forward plan, and if not, confirmation that the relevant notification requirements have been complied with
  - If the report is exempt from call-in, on what basis it is exempt
  - Constitution and legal matters
  - Resource and financial implications
  - Any implications for equality and diversity, cohesion and integration, including supporting impact assessments or screening forms
  - Impacts on other Council policies and City Priorities (detailed in the Council's Policy Framework and elsewhere); and
  - Consultation undertaken with stakeholders (including Ward Members) and the general public.

3.1.4 The new template therefore provides a framework from which greater assurances can be provided to decision takers, and to the general public, that the most significant corporate governance considerations have been taken in account.

## **3.2 Launching the revised guidance and template**

3.2.1 It is proposed that the template and revised guidance come into effect from the start of the next municipal year. Approximately 150 frequent report authors have been identified who will require a briefing on the new arrangements. Sessions lasting around half an hour have been offered to these officers during May 2011. During these sessions report authors will be introduced to the new guidance and template.

3.2.2 These launch sessions may also be supplemented by a short e-learning package for those officers unable to attend, less regular report authors, or those who join the Council after May 2011. Work is ongoing to explore this as a possibility in view of current budgetary constraints.

3.2.3 The revised guidance and template will also be available from the intranet and report authors will be sent a link to the guidance by the relevant Committee Clerk.

## **4 Corporate governance considerations**

### **4.1 Risk management**

4.1.1 Adoption of the revised template will help contribute to the consideration of risk management matters in reports.

### **4.2 Public Interest Test**

4.2.1 There is no information within this report which has been identified as exempt, and therefore applying the public interest test is unnecessary.

### **4.3 Forward Plan**

4.3.1 The recommendations in this report do not relate to a key decision and therefore prior notification on the Forward Plan is not necessary.

### **4.4 Scrutiny process: Call-In**

4.4.1 The Corporate Governance and Audit Committee is requested to comment on the proposed changes in advance of the Head of Governance Services taking a significant operational decision. As such call-in will not be applicable to the Committee's resolution or the subsequent decision of the Head of Governance Services.

### **4.5 Constitution and legal matters**

4.5.1 The Corporate Governance and Audit Committee is authorised by full Council to review the adequacy of policies and practices to ensure compliance with statutory and other guidance, the Committee is also authorised to review the adequacy of the Council's corporate governance arrangements (including internal control arrangements and risk

management). As such, consideration of this matter falls within the Committee's terms of reference.

4.5.2 Article 13 of the Council's Constitution sets out the factors which should be taken into account as part of decision making. The revised guidance makes full reference to these requirements.

4.5.3 Application of the revised guidance and use of the revised template will help mitigate the risk of legal challenge to the Council's decisions on the grounds that not all the relevant factors were taken into consideration.

#### **4.6 Financial and resource implications**

4.6.1 There are minor resource implications in relation to the launch sessions being provided on the revised guidance and template, and these can be met from within existing resources. The resource implications in relation to the proposed e-learning course are still being explored.

#### **4.7 Equality and diversity and cohesion and integration**

4.7.1 No issues have been identified, and as the report is not related to a Key or Major decision, an equality screening form is not specifically required.

#### **4.8 Council policies and City priorities**

4.8.1 The proposed Council Business Plan for 2011-2015 contains a number of cross-Council priorities and indicators. The revised report template will allow Governance Services to monitor progress against two of these priorities. These are:

<b>Council value</b>	<b>Improvement priority</b>	<b>Measure / Target</b>
Working with communities	We will consult with local people on changes that may affect their lives.	Percentage of key and major decisions which have evidence that consultation has taken place with local people.
Treating people fairly	Equality and Diversity and Cohesion and Integration (EDCI) Impact Assessments influence Council policy and decision making.	Percentage of key and major decisions for which there is a completed EDCI Impact Assessment or screening form.

4.8.2 It is anticipated that reliable data will be available from relevant reports to monitor the above targets from quarter three of the 2011/12 municipal year.

#### **4.9 Consultation**

4.9.1 Consultation on the contents of the revised guidance has taken place with the Chair of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, the Assistant Chief Executive, the Head of Equality, the Principal Risk Management Officer, the Corporate Risk Management Group, Corporate Governance Board, the Head of Scrutiny and Member

Development, the Corporate Consultation Manager, and members of the Corporate Leadership Team.

- 4.9.2 Discussions have also taken place with lead officers for various committees to establish whether the report writing guidance and templates are suitable for their Committee. Following such discussions, it is considered that reports to Plans Panels and the Licensing Committee and its Sub-Committees should not be included in the guidance because of the different factors which need to be taken into account in their decision making, such as the licensing objectives and development issues. The officers responsible for these Committees will now develop their own guidance and templates for report authors to use.

## **5 Recommendations**

- 5.1 Members are asked to comment on the revised report writing guidance and template attached as Appendix 1.

## **6 Background documents**

- 6.1 Council Business Plan 2011-2015
- 6.2 Leeds City Council – Guidance to Report Authors (last updated March 2010)