

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

Wednesday, 9th November, 2011

PRESENT:

Councillor G Driver in the Chair

Councillors P Grahame, N Taggart,
C Campbell, G Kirkland, A Lowe , C Fox,
P Harrand (as substitute for W Hyde),
T Leadley (as substitute for J Elliot) and
G Hussain

Co-optee

G Tollefson

Apologies

Councillors J Elliott, W Hyde and T Hanley

43 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

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

44 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no resolutions to exclude the public.

45 Late Items

The Chair admitted two late items to the Committee which were presented as verbal reports in light of new developments in the following subject areas, (Minutes 49 and 50 refer):

- future of Local Public Audit; and
- developments affecting Standards for Members in the Localism Bill.

46 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting. However Councillor G Hussein declared a personal interest in Agenda item 8 (Minute 53 refers) as a Member of Leeds Faith Forum, Councillor C Campbell declared a personal interest in Agenda item 8 (Minute 53 refers) as a Member Leeds Initiative – City Centre Partnership and Leeds Initiative Sustainable Economy and Culture Board and Mr G Tollefson declared a personal interest in Agenda item 8 (Minute 53 refers) as a Member of NHS Clinical Commissioning Group.

47 Apologies For Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Hanley; Hyde; and Elliott.

48 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee held on 30th September 2011 were approved as a correct record.

49 Future of Local Public Audit

The Chair invited the Chief Officer (Audit and Risk) to present the Committee with a verbal update on the future of local public audit, following information presented by a representative of the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) at the Core Cities Audit Committee – Chairs' meeting.

The Committee were informed that to date around 450 responses had been received following recent consultation on the proposals put forward. A summary of the responses will be published by CLG in the near future and then Government will publish their response to the consultation.

Members were also told about the ongoing Audit Commission fee consultation which proposes a 10% reduction in audit fees for 2012/13. At this point the Committee were also informed about a £41k refund receive by the council from the Audit Commission for 2011/12.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved to:

- (a) thank the Chief Officer (Audit and Risk) for his comprehensive update
- (b) request the minutes of the Core Cities Audit Committee – Chairs' meeting from 7th November 2011 be circulated to them when they become available; and
- (c) request a further update report as required.

50 Developments Affecting Standards for Members in the Localism Bill

The Chair invited the Head of Governance Services to provide a verbal update on the Localism Bill. The Head of Governance Services informed the Committee that on 7th November 2011 the House of Commons agreed amendments to the Localism Bill relating to Standards.

The Bill now requires that all Principal Authorities, amongst other matters, to;

- adopt a code of conduct which must be consistent with the Nolan Principles;
- ensure that the adopted code of conduct sets out the council's requirements in terms of the registration and disclosure of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests; and

- put in place arrangements under which they can investigate and take decisions on written allegations that a member has not complied with the code of conduct.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved to thank the Head of Governance Services for his timely update and ask that the Committee be kept in formed of further developments.

51 Leeds City Region - Local Enterprise Partnership Governance

The Head of Regional Policy presented a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Access and Performance) which set out the current governance arrangements for the Leeds City Region Partnership. The report particularly focussed on the current relationship between the formally constituted Joint Committee and the recently established Local Enterprise Partnership Board (LEP).

The Chief Officer (Localities and Partnerships) was also in attendance.

Members discussed the report in detail particularly exploring the governance arrangements and how democratic accountability is provided – both in terms of input and feedback. Members considered that further scope exists for the work of the joint committee to have a working democratic relationship with councillors in the constituent authorities.

Members also gave consideration to the existing voting arrangements for the joint committee, particularly whether there might be scope for examining the potential for an alternative approach based on a 'weighted' vote.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved to:

- (a) note the contents of the report, particularly the relationship between the City region Joint Committee and the LEP Board; and
- (b) to receive further reports as required on developments of the legal status of the LEP as it is determined.

52 Leeds Initiative Governance

The Head of Leeds Initiative and International Partnerships presented a report which updated Members on progress with the review of the Leeds Initiative partnership arrangements and the associated and the associated planning and performance management arrangements in the city.

The Chief Officer (Localities and Partnerships) was also in attendance.

Members considered the report noting the improvements made to the governance arrangements of the Leeds Initiative. Members were also of the view that further consideration should be given to whether the meetings of the

Leeds Initiative Board and its five supporting Strategic Partnership Boards should be held in public to provide greater transparency and openness.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved to note the contents of the report and recommend that the Head of Partnerships ask the Leeds Initiative Board, and its five supporting Strategic Partnership Boards, to further consider the possibility of their meetings being held in public.

53 Small compensation claims made against the council

The Insurance Manager (Resources) presented a report of the Director of Resources which provided information detailing the amount and type of small claims received by the Council and which also illustrated the monitoring processes which have been put in place in order to enable services to take action, where possible, to reduce the numbers of small claims made against there service.

Members considered the report and raised questions about the arrangements for paying smaller claims and the monitoring undertaken surrounding these payments.

Members also highlighted the areas where most money was paid out to claimants and suggested that a focussed effort should be made to reduce the number of claims made in the first instance.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved to note the report.

54 Work Programme

The Director of Resources submitted a report notifying Members of the work programme.

The Committee reviewed its forthcoming work programme and considered a request from the Head of Governance Services for the deferral of an item related to the review of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance to a later date due to the imminent announcement of the Localism Bill and the likely impact this will have on the code.

RESOLVED – The Committee resolved to agree to the request of the Head of Governance Services to defer the review of the Code of Corporate Governance scheduled for December and otherwise agree the work programme as submitted.