
Corporate Governance Panel

Report of the meeting held on 24th March 2010

Matters for Decision

21. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

By reference to a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is reproduced as an Appendix hereto) and after consideration of proposed changes to the Code of Financial Management and Code of Procurement, the Panel

RECOMMEND

that the Council approve the amended Code of Financial Management and Code of Procurement as appended to the report attached.

22. APPOINTMENT OF CABINET MEMBERS

By reference to a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services consideration was given to a proposal by the Structure Review Working Party to amend the Constitution in relation to the power of the Leader. Members of the Council will recall that the proposal was initially drawn to the attention of the Council at its meeting on 17th February 2010 (Minute No. 09/77 of the Council Minutes refer). Whilst the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act requires the Council to implement either an elected mayor or an executive leader model at its annual meeting in May 2011, it is being proposed that interim arrangements should be made for the Leader of the Council to be authorised to determine the membership of the Cabinet with effect from May 2010. The Panel therefore

RECOMMEND

that the Council approve interim arrangements to move to the 'strong leader' model of leadership and delete the following Council Procedure Rules with effect from the annual meeting of the Council in May 2010:-

"1.1 (vii) appoint the Deputy Leader;

1.1 (viii) agree the number of members to be appointed to the Cabinet and appoint those members to the Cabinet."

Matters for Information

23. HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT FRAUD STRATEGY AND PROSECUTION POLICY

In noting the increasing levels of fraud detection, sanction and prosecution activity undertaken by the Council, the Panel has approved the content of a revised Benefit Fraud Strategy and Benefit Fraud Prosecution Policy. Additionally, the Panel has authorised staff within the Fraud Team to undertake investigations in the fraud affecting local taxation and housing services and all other District Council services and to report to the relevant Directorate on the outcomes, findings and recommendations arising there-from.

24. ORGANISATIONAL ASSESSMENT 2008/09

The Panel has been acquainted with the Council's Organisational Assessment for 2008/09. The Audit Commission has confirmed that the Council has performed well overall, improving in a number of areas that matter to local people.

**25. EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT:
CERTIFICATION OF GRANTS CLAIMS 2008/09**

The Panel has received and noted a report from the External Auditor detailing the certification of specific grants received by the Council in 2008/09. No significant issues have been raised in the report.

26. NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE

The Panel has received background information to the National Fraud Initiative and the work undertaken by the Council on the resulting potentially fraudulent matches in data provided by the Audit Commission. Results of the data matching exercise indicate that a low number of fraud cases and errors have been identified. These are currently being investigated by the Fraud Team.

27. RISK REGISTER

The Panel has been acquainted with changes made to the Risk Register between the period 1st September 2009 to 28th February 2010. A request has been made for specific information on the "very high" residual risks to be included in future reports.

28. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE: INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT

The Panel has been acquainted with progress by the Internal Audit Service against the Audit Plan for 2009/10 and noted the performance standards achieved.

29. **PROGRESS REPORT ON ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND RISK ASSURANCE**

Progress made to date in respect of the achievement of the action plan supporting the Annual Governance Statement and the Council's improvement plan has been noted by the Panel, together with an overview of the level of assurance provided to the Council for those risks identified within the Risk Register.

30. **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

The Panel has reviewed and endorsed the content of a Member Development Policy.

C J Stephens
Chairman