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CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 7 December 2011

Present: Councillor S Foulkes (Chair)

Councillors P Davies AR McLachlan
AER Jones JE Green
A McArdle T Harney

Invited Members: Councillors JE Green T Harney
(Non Voting)

17 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

18 AGENDA DISTRIBUTION

RESOLVED: That

(1) in future agendas for the Corporate Governance Committee meetings be sent:

- (a) to all Members of the Cabinet;**
- (b) electronically to Anna Klonowski Associates Ltd; and**

(2) the Leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups be requested to inform the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management the names of Members of their Groups who they wish to receive a copy of future agendas for the Corporate Governance Committee meetings.

19 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 November 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

20 WIRRAL COUNCIL'S MEMBERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

The Chief Executive circulated a copy of the draft Questionnaire and accompanying letter to all Members. They had been prepared in order to conduct a survey to ascertain Members' views, as had been agreed at the last meeting (Minute No. 15 refers). The Member Training Steering Group (MTSG), led by Councillor T Harney, had set out its proposals in respect of the identified need to review and improve Members' corporate governance training and development, under KLOE 10 – Member Capacity. This training and development was a priority and a commitment had been made to provide the training required between January and March 2012. The questionnaire also provided an opportunity for Members to identify their other training needs.

Reference was made to the wealth of experience some Members had which it was hoped could be channelled positively. This would be included in the accompanying

letter along with the deadline for the return of Members' questionnaires, 16 December 2011. All three Political Group Leaders were in agreement over the content of the questionnaire and the accompanying letter.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Members' questionnaire and accompanying letter be amended as detailed above, the three Political Group Leaders' electronic signatures be added to the bottom of the letter and they be despatched to Members without delay; and**
- (2) the MTSG and the Organisational Development Manager, Melissa Holt be thanked for their contributions to the Members' questionnaire.**

21 **IMPROVING THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

A report by the Chief Executive served to assist the improvements under way in respect of the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements.

Members were informed that good governance meant:

- focussing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area;
- Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;
- promoting the values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour;
- taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk;
- developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective; and
- engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

The Chief Executive's report proposed that Corporate Governance Development and Training be reviewed and improved across the Council. It also proposed that a Corporate Governance Amnesty to enable officers and partners to have confidential conversations and discussions with Cabinet Members. This would allow them to air Corporate Governance concerns in confidence and without fear of reprisal.

An Improving Corporate Governance Report by AKA was attached at Appendix A to the report. The programme outlined in Appendix A was in addition to the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) work, previously considered by this Committee. Plans in respect of each KLOE were appended to the report at Appendix B for the Committee's consideration.

The report recommended that a Members' development programme should run ahead of the officer programme to enable the change programme to be led by those who had the legitimacy of the electorate. It was considered essential that this programme was shaped by Elected Members. It was also proposed to work with the Member Training Steering Group to draft a questionnaire and carry out interviews to establish what further development Members would like. The aim was to consult, design and commission appropriate development programmes for Members, officers and partners.

The report also proposed cross departmental activity, a Joint Cabinet and Chief Officer Discussion Forum, set out overarching timelines for the activity proposed and a list of milestones.

The Committee was concerned that the draft Protocol – Promoting Good Governance in Wirral MBC had not been included as an appendix to the report.

Councillor S Foulkes informed that the Corporate Governance Amnesty would be presented to the work force once the draft Protocol was made available to the Committee as had been requested. The Committee wanted clear guidelines to deal with Corporate Governance complaints quickly and systematically.

Councillor J Green highlighted, in relation to the proposed Corporate Governance Amnesty, that there were some elements of the report he had some concerns over.

It was noted that there was a confidential email address that could be used by Council staff, who wanted to raise their concerns, but were not happy doing this directly with the politicians.

The Committee had regard to its scheduled meeting dates, KLOEs, work required and timelines. Councillor A McLachlan informed of the progress being made in respect of KLOE 6 – Review of Committee Services including a Review of Committee Reports over the last three months. It was noted that a Working Group had been established and was due to meet on 9 January 2012.

It was reported that a Democracy Working Party had been set up comprising two Members of each Political Group to seek to achieve consensus on the most appropriate form of democracy within the Council, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses both of the old Committee system and the current Cabinet system, and of any legislation and subsequent regulations as they become known. It was noted that this Working Party may wish to report feedback in relation to KLOE 6, and possibly link in with work being carried out.

It was suggested that, to provide some continuity, it would be helpful, for a Member of the Democracy Working Party and the Member Training Steering Group to join the Committee Services Working Group on KLOE 6. It was agreed that meetings needed to be timetabled to coincide with when decisions were required and recommendations being considered around the KLOEs.

The Chief Executive informed that he had written to Members setting out the definition of what a KLOE Lead Member would do. There had been no feedback on this so he presumed they were happy with the detailed definitions provided. If this was the case, he would circulate these definitions wider.

Councillor J Green informed that if any Member leading on a KLOE wanted some support from Conservative Members they were welcome to discuss this with him.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management be requested to provide each of the three Political Group Leaders with a copy of the draft Protocol – Promoting Good Governance in Wirral MBC and the Deputy Director be requested to provide them with a report on Action 2 and if there is a consensus of agreement the Protocol and recommendations in respect of Action 2, they be adopted, but if not, a special meeting of the Committee be convened to consider all of the issues raised in detail;**

- (2) the recommendations of the Improving Corporate Governance in Wirral MBC Report, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be agreed in principle, subject to the agreement of the draft Protocol at (2) above;
- (3) the project plans, as set out at Appendix B to the report, be noted; and
- (4) the current Committee meeting schedule will remain in place for the time being but meetings will be cancelled if there is insufficient business to be transacted.

22 **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT - DELIVERING THE COUNCIL'S VISION AND VALUES**

A report by the Chief Executive set out proposals to ensure that the Council's performance management processes would drive the delivery of the Council's vision and values and also enable corporate governance improvements to be reflected in all areas of performance. Key strands of this work included ensuring strong linkage of the Performance Management Framework with the Corporate Plan, the Strategic Change Programme and the work of the Corporate Governance Improvement Programme as a whole.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the proposed Values and Behaviours, PERFORM, be reviewed in the context of the 2012/13 Corporate Plan and that the revised Vision and Values will clearly underpin the performance management framework;
- (2) the proposed performance improvement framework be reviewed to ensure that it fully reflects the revised values and behaviours and that Corporate Governance issues and improvements are embedded in the Corporate Planning process;
- (3) a programme of quarterly review and challenge of performance against Corporate and Departmental Plans be developed to ensure that progress in the achievement of outcomes is monitored and supported. (An outline of key actions is detailed in Appendix1 to the report.); and
- (4) the proposed organisational development process be reviewed to ensure that it supports the delivery of the outcomes reflected in the hierarchy of plans – Corporate, Departmental, Service and individual.