
MEETING	AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE	4 NOVEMBER 2009
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS B WATSON (CHAIR), BROOKS (VICE-CHAIR), BOWGETT, KIRK, R WATSON AND FIRTH (SUBSTITUTE)
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLORS JAMIESON-BALL AND SCOTT
IN ATTENDANCE	COUNCILLOR MOORE (EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES)

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. No interests were declared.

34. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on 21 September 2009 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record

35. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

36. DRAFT REVISED CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

Members considered a report which invited them to comment on the format and content of a set of draft revised Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs) prior to their referral to Executive and Full Council.

The draft revised CPRs, attached at Annex A to the report, were intended to provide a more flexible set of rules and reflect the more devolved decision-making framework adopted by the Council in April 2009, whilst maintaining the key principles of the current procurement regulations. Unlike the current regulations, which formed part of the Financial Regulations, they would be maintained as a separate document. One major change contained in the revised CPRs was that 'routine' procurements over £500k (as defined in Annex B to the report) would no longer need to go to the Executive for approval. Other substantial and minor changes were listed in paragraph 10 of the report.

The draft CPRs had been issued to finance managers and other key Officers for consultation and were now before the Committee to seek Members' views before the final draft was taken to Executive. Officers confirmed at the meeting that a number of amendments had already been made to the draft document at Annex A, to correct typographical errors and respond to consultation. During their discussion, Members agreed a number of further changes, as detailed in Resolution (i) below.

RESOLVED: (i) That the draft revised Contract Procedure Rules at Annex A to the report be recommended to the Executive, for onward approval at Full Council, subject to the amendments already made by Officers and subject to the following additional amendments:

- Paragraphs 6.1 and 9.1 – reduce the financial limit for verbal quotations to £5,000.
- Paragraphs 6 to 11 – amend the wording so as to clarify the position in respect of procurements of an exact value as well as those under or above a specific value.
- Paragraph 13.1 – remove the word 'racial' from the sixth bullet point.
- Paragraph 27.6 – remove the word 'cancel' from the second line and substitute 'rescind', and break down the paragraph into sub-paragraphs to make it clearer.
- Paragraph 27.9 – remove the word 'formal' from the first line.
- Paragraph 30.2 – Officers to consider whether this paragraph should be re-worded.¹

REASON: To reflect the Committee's views on the appropriateness of the Contract Procedure Rules in maintaining the integrity of the Council's procurement arrangements.

(ii) That the recommendation to Executive / Full Council in respect of the delegation of routine procurements (as defined in Annex B) to the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer be approved.

REASON: To ensure that the Council can continue to deliver business as usual and that only non-routine procurements are referred to the Executive for approval.

Action Required

1. Include the requested amendments in the report to Executive

SA

37. CORPORATE DEBT POLICY

Members considered a report which invited them to review and comment on the content and format of a draft Corporate Debt Policy prior to its referral to Executive and Full Council.

The draft Policy, attached as Annex A to the report, set out a framework for a consistent, 'firm but fair' approach to debt collection that would apply across the organisation to ensure that the Council continued to maximise collection performance, in line with its Income Policy.

The draft Policy had been circulated to all finance managers and key Officers involved in debt collection across the Council, as well as to efficiency partners Northgate Kendrick Ash. Consultation had also taken place with the Social Inclusion Working Group and comments had been invited from the Citizens Advice Bureau and Christians Against Poverty.

During their discussion, Members emphasised the need for clear communication with customers, in particular those with learning difficulties, as well as the need to use tact and discretion when communicating with relatives of the deceased. Officers explained that the standard correspondence was currently under review. They agreed to make the new draft templates available to view on the intranet and to circulate an e-mail to Members of the Audit & Governance Committee when this had been done.¹

RESOLVED: That the draft Corporate Debt Policy be approved for submission to the Executive, subject to the following amendments:

- Paragraph 28(l) – make reference to the Data Protection Act with regard to the sharing of personal information
- Paragraph 50 – clarify the wording of this paragraph with the Legal team.²

REASON: To reflect the Committee's views on the policy prior to its approval by Full Council.

Action Required

1. Make the templates available on completion of review and e-mail A&G Members to inform them SA
2. Include the requested amendments in report to Executive SA

B Watson, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 6.35 pm].