

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING ON 23RD JUNE 2006

44. ISSUES FOR SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL ARISING OUT OF A REVIEW OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE REPORT ON LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

DECISION:

- (1) That all groups make a clear statement of support and commitment to partnership working through the LSP;
- (2) That the Chairs and Vice-Chairmanships of DSPs are appointed according to their suitability and merit in the opinion of the Leader;
- (3) That the Chairman of the Standards Committee be invited to report to the Council on the extent to which he feels that the members of the authority understand and support the role of the Standards Committee and any proposals he may have for improving the work of the Standards Committee;
- (4) That in view of the increasing importance of members' training, the Corporate Manager of Human Resources undertakes a review of the resources required to support a more comprehensive member training and development programme at South Kesteven using external expertise where appropriate;
- (5) That the Constitution and Accounts Committee design an amendment to the Constitution so that with effect from the 1st May 2007, the desirable and essential competencies required of both Cabinet and DSP members are defined with all members being required to attend designated sessions for the essential competencies within twelve months of their appointment;
- (6) That in the autumn of this year, staff of South Kesteven are asked to complete the survey used by the Audit Commission to inform the Corporate Governance report so that results can be compared;
- (7) That the Council reaffirms its commitment to the concept of Local Area Assemblies and pledges to work with local people to make these meetings effective forums for wider community engagement;
- (8) That under the Council's priority for vulnerable people, the Director of Community Services prepares a strategy for Social Inclusion by December 2005;
- (9) That those members who may have concerns about the current system, or indeed a preference for the previous Committee system, consider how they will be able to demonstrate to an external assessor that these views have not deterred them from playing a full and active part in the Council's decision making and scrutiny process as set out in the constitution;
- (10) That the Corporate Manager of Human Resources investigates the level of compliance with the Council's policies regarding staff appraisals and the effectiveness of the appraisals that have been undertaken.

The Leader presented report CEX293 by the Chief Executive, which set out recommendations from the Cabinet following referral at the previous Council meeting and scrutiny by the Resources DSP. In proposing acceptance of the ten recommendations presented in the report, the Leader proposed that recommendation 2 instead provide that the Leader be given authority to consider the merit and suitability of members for Chair and Vice-Chairmanships, rather than referring the consideration of such a selection procedure to the Constitution and Accounts Committee. This was seconded.

Debate ensued on whether or not it was within the best interests of the Council to allow solely the Leader the authority to determine the suitability of members. One member spoke at length in opposition to this amendment of recommendation 2; he suggested that British democracy had fought over many generations against patronage; there were no criteria for selection in this proposal; democracy, in relation to scrutiny, was about challenging the executive and Chairmen were of symbolic importance in this role. A number of other members spoke in support of this objection. It was suggested that criteria or a protocol could have been established for appointments; that there was too much potential for favouritism; if a private organisation operated in such a way, its performance would be failing; and the resources of members would not be utilised in the best way if the proposed was accepted.

In favour of the proposal and in relation to the points raised previously about democracy, a member of the administration commented that the electorate had voted their members into power. He added that Chairmanships had been offered to opposition members and therefore the administration could not rightly be accused of favouring their own members. Another member of the administration added that the proposal did not imply appointments would only be made within the controlling party. This was supported by the Leader who stipulated that the opposition's assumption that Chair and Vice-Chairmanships would not be offered to them was incorrect.

Suggesting that the proposal was contrary to the principles of democracy, a member proposed an amendment that the recommendations in the report be accepted as printed. This received a seconder and on being put to the vote, was lost. A further vote was taken on the original motion and this was carried following a vote.