

# BOARD MINUTES

**Meeting:** Board meeting  
**Date:** Wednesday 19 November 2008  
**Time:** 11.00 – 3.30 p.m.  
**Location:** Board Room, Griffin House, Lever Street, Manchester

**Attendees:** Dr Bob Chilton, Chair  
 Professor Judy Simons, Deputy Chair  
 Lizzie Abderrahim  
 Councillor Shirley Flint  
 Paul Gott  
 Elizabeth Hall  
 Mike Kendall  
 Councillor Mehboob Khan

**Apologies:** Councillor Sir Ron Watson

**In attendance:** Glenys Stacey, Chief Executive  
 Richard Scott, Head of Communications  
 Navin Gokool, Head of Governance and Client Services  
 Paul Hoey, Director of Strategy and Guidance  
 Hazel Salisbury, Director of Casework  
 Freda Sharkey, Acting Head of Legal  
 Colin Bardsley, Analyst (item 08/112 only)

**Minutes:** Claire Chadwick

Item No.	Subject	Action
08/100	<b>Apologies</b>	
	Councillor Sir Ron Watson	
08/101	<b>Minutes of September 2008 Meeting (open session)</b>	
	The minutes were <u>approved</u> and signed by the Chair.	
08/102	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
	There were none.	

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### 08/103 Declaration of Board member interests

The Chair asked each Board member to declare any interests.

- Elizabeth Hall reported that both she and Paul Gott would come to the end of their current Board appointment on 13 February 2009. The Chair thanked Elizabeth Hall for pointing this out and informed the meeting that he would discuss this with the Department for Communities and Local Government at his next meeting with them on 28 November. BC
- Bob Chilton – raised an interest in item 08/109 (scheme of publication) and asked the Deputy Chair, Judy Simons to chair this item when it was reached.
- Lizzie Abderrahim – raised an interest in relation to the mention of Gloucestershire in appendix B of the Code of Conduct report.

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### 08/104 Chair's report (oral)

The Chair explained that applicants would be interviewed for the Board Liberal Democrat vacancy on 28 November in Manchester. He then reported on forthcoming diary engagements and informed the meeting that Sir Ron Watson was arranging for him to meet with Margaret Eaton at the Local Government Association. He has also been invited to the next G7 meeting on 28 January. RW

The Chair then noted that a point raised in a recent discussion was "how to raise trust in the redress systems in democracy", he suggested that this would be an interesting debate for the Board to have at a future meeting. This was agreed.

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### 08/105 Board members feedback

- Mike Kendall – Attended a recent ACSeS meeting. He reported that as a result of this he has been invited to attend branch meetings across the country (between now and early summer).
  - The matter of resource implications relating to officer support was raised and the Board noted that they would need to be aware of this when accepting engagements. It was agreed that future Board member engagement should be part of a strategic approach co-ordinated by Richard Scott, Head of Communications.
  - Councillor Shirley Flint – will be attending NALC 3 day and
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1 day road shows next year. She explained that she will liaise with the Head of Communications regarding an opportunity to present or exhibit.

- The Chair informed the Board that there was now useful support material produced by the Communications team for Board members in their ambassadorial role. Board members were encouraged to access and use the material.
- Mike Kendall questioned what Board members should do if contacted direct about an operational matter. The Chief Executive responded that these types of questions should immediately be referred to senior officers for resolution. The Board agreed a consistent approach is needed to informal contact and asked the Chief Executive to provide a suitable response for Board members to adopt should they be approached on operational matters. GS
- The Chair asked that the Director of Strategy and Guidance deal with a very recent e-mail request on an operational matter received by some Board members. PH

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#### 08/106 Chief Executive's report

The Chief Executive introduced her report to the Board and asked for evaluation and comment on the embryonic Corporate Scorecard.

The Board agreed that the corporate scorecard was an interesting development and provided a candid assessment of the organisation.

The assessments in each quadrant presented in the report were discussed. The Board anticipated that as fuller measures were included in relation to performance, then the picture may be more mixed.

The Board noted the position in relation to internal processes and discussed the work in train to drive improvement. The Board noted and discussed Project Excellence – a project to review and refresh the organisation's approach to casework – and noted the work in hand to improve programme and project controls in the organisation. The Board agreed to review progress in Project Excellence at the March 2009 Board meeting. GS

The issue of future reporting was raised. The Board asked that future reports reflect the direction of change in each quadrant over time and it was suggested that the new Operations Report should follow immediately after the scorecard on the Board's regular agenda, as they are linked. The Board considered the risk graphic, the corporate scorecard and the operations report to be key components in a NG

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developing suite of clear, comprehensive and concise reporting.

It was agreed that the corporate scorecard would be developed in line with the Board's discussions and that it would become a standing item at future meetings. NG

The Board then reviewed the Risk Graphic and noted that risk 4 (investigations of poor quality) has increased in likelihood. The Board noted that a "lessons learned" exercise was planned in relation to a particular case causing concern, and that Project Excellence had an important role to play in mitigating the risk as a whole. GS

The Board noted that Project Excellence was timely and appropriate now that the organisation's caseload and case profile had changed. The Board agreed with the suggestion that the March Board would be a good time to discuss risk four and mitigations, alongside the review of progress in Project Excellence. GS

The Board reviewed and discussed the organisation's financial position. Currently the organisation expects to end the year within budget. The Chief Executive updated the Board on a recent financial workshop and on plans for a follow up workshop in December.

It was agreed to bring a strategic finance report back to the Board for consideration in January 2009. NG

The Chief Executive explained that "hot topics" had been brought back from the Annual Assembly and it would be useful to bring these back to the Board to review in January. RS

The Board agreed with a proposal to review a risk in detail at each Board meeting and selected risk three – insufficient cases to sustain the investigations function – for review in January, alongside a review of arrangements for managing high-profile cases. HS

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**08/107 Consultation response: Codes of conduct for local authority members and employees**

The Board reviewed a paper seeking a steer on the strategic issues arising from Communities and Local Government's consultation paper in relation to changes to the code for local authority members and the introduction of a code for local authority employees. The Board noted that the senior management team is identifying the more technical issues. PH

The Board considered the proposals relating to definition of a relevant criminal offence presented a dilemma. The proposal – that offences attracting a caution would not be relevant – offered certainty and consistency, but may lead to reputational damage for local authorities

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in some circumstances. Lizzie Abderrahim's preference was for the inclusion of offences leading to a caution. After discussion the Board agreed that the proposal in the consultation document was workable, and had the benefit of certainty, but it would be appropriate for the Board's response to the consultation to provide practical examples of how it would work in practice in order to assist in evaluating the options.

The Board discussed the application of the code to members participating in political group meetings. The Board agreed that the Director of Strategy and Guidance should speak to the Department of Communities and Local Government and also discuss the matter further with the Local Government Association. It was agreed further clarification was needed here.

PH

The Board then moved to the remainder of the report. Detailed proposals (in paragraphs 15-19 of the report) were agreed. The Board discussed the benefits and drawbacks of extending the code to parish clerks and concluded that parish clerks should be subject to proportionate controls. The Board agreed that the organisation's response to the consultation exercise should assist consideration by including information on the Board's work on partnerships.

PH

The Board discussed other aspects of the paper and were determined to speak out strongly in favour of an officer code. The Board agreed that the organisation's response should also make sensible suggestions on the enforcement issues around any national officer code.

PH

The Board noted that the consultation period does not close until 24 December and agreed they were content for the senior team to develop a more worked-out response following the Board meeting, for approval and sign-off by the chair.

SMT

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#### 08/108 New working arrangements

The Board considered and discussed ways in which the working arrangements of the Board should develop. The Board approved all of the recommendations made to it in the report proposing new arrangements.

GS

To enable the Board and senior team to ensure that all relevant matters were considered over the course of the business year, the Board agreed a core annual business schedule for Board meetings.

To ensure that the Board is well-informed and able to exercise scrutiny, the Board agreed a new suite of management information reporting and to new arrangements enabling the Board to scrutinise

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and question key developments and areas of activity. This will be by way of presentations, discussions and workshops on Board meeting days and elsewhere. The Board will also increase its involvement in the identification of risks and in scrutinising the efficacy of risk mitigation, by regular consideration at Board meetings.

The Board reviewed the roles played by individual members of the Board. Members commonly wished to add value to the organisation as well as to exercise scrutiny and agreed that, in addition to the necessary strategic and scrutiny roles, individual members should develop their ambassadorial roles through an agreed programme of stakeholder engagement.

RS

The Board agreed to dissolve its interim panels. The Board commissioned a new scheme of delegation to reflect new arrangements.

The Chair summed up the discussions noting that the Board agreed the need for Committees and working 'task and finish' groups where value could be added.

It was agreed to keep these arrangements under review.

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#### 08/109 Scheme of publication

The Deputy Chair, Judy Simons chaired this item.

The Board discussed a paper dealing with the requirement to have a publication scheme approved by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

The Board agreed the proposal to adopt the model publication scheme provided by the ICO, as there is no immediately obvious case for arguing that the organisation's needs fall outside the model scheme. The Board noted next steps.

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#### 08/110 Draft corporate plan/planning update

This Board noted the approach taken to the development of the Corporate plan for 2009 – 2012 and agreed the basic outline.

The overarching objectives and aims for the organisation were discussed and comments expressed. The objectives were agreed.

The Board considered the writing style to be adopted and commissioned a personal and direct style much in line with the Board's plain English approach to its more general published documentation.

GS

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The Board noted and agreed that the Chief Executive would work with the Chair and deputy Chair to complete the Corporate Plan drafting for the calendar year end. The Board agreed to sign off by the chair and deputy chair. GS

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**08/111 Board operational report**

The Board reviewed a first iteration of a comprehensive operations report. The content and format of the report were accepted and welcomed by the Board, with various members making suggestions for minor improvement.

It was agreed that financial reporting and HR reporting should not be part of the operations report. Instead the report should focus on operational delivery. However, in considering the HR reporting provided in this prototype report, the Board queried the organisation's arrangements for equality review and commissioned further (separate) information. NG

For the Operations report, the Board favoured a mix of explanatory narrative and tabular and statistical information. The Board recognised that a picture will build up over time.

The Board agreed this report was extremely useful and requested that it be a standing item at each meeting. NG

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**08/112 Quarterly returns**

The Board noted the progress in monitoring data collection from local authorities for Quarter 2 to July, and were pleased to hear of the continued high submission rates.

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**08/113 Annual Assembly feedback and lessons for 2009**

The Chair thanked everyone involved in the Annual Assembly for all their hard work and noted the very good feedback which had been received.

The Board recognised Councillor Shirley Flint's contribution to the Annual Assembly Steering Committee over the last 2 years and agreed that she should continue in this role.

It was requested and subsequently agreed that the Board should be involved at a very early stage in relation to the shaping of the 2009 Annual Assembly programme.

The Chair summed up, stating that the Board noted the report and would like proposals for format brought back in January 2009.

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The Board then went into closed session.

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The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 20 January 2009 (11.00 – 3.30)



Chair