

LEASE and Lease Conferences Ltd

Governance and delegation of authority framework

1) About LEASE

LEASE is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Welsh Government (WG). LEASE works at 'arm's length' from government as an independent organisation. LEASE owns a subsidiary, Lease Conferences Limited, which provides conferences and training and some advertising opportunities primarily to leasehold professionals.

We support people to solve their problems relating to leasehold housing in England and Wales. We offer legal advice, information and training. We do not represent anyone, but guide customers towards an appropriate avenue. Customers include leaseholders, landlords (including lessee-owned and managed) and professionals including lawyers, managing agents, estate agents and property valuers. We also help people with problems associated with park homes.

As a public body, LEASE's approach to governance mirrors the Seven Principles of Standards in Public Life called the 'Nolan Principles' and they are set out below:

- **Selflessness:** Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.
- **Integrity:** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- **Objectivity:** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- **Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- **Openness:** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- **Honesty:** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

- Leadership: Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

2) Vision, Mission and Values

LEASE's board has agreed the following *Vision, Mission and Values*:

Vision

Improving the lives of leasehold and park home owners by empowering them to solve their problems.

Mission

To be the best source of advice and training for those living and working in leasehold and park homes by providing clear and effective advice and training to our customers through a process of continuous improvement...

Values

- Impartiality: our services are available to anyone and free of any bias.
- Independence: we are independent, apolitical and arm's length from government.
- Quality focused: we are committed to continuously improving our services to our customers.
- Fair: We treat all our customers professionally and with integrity.

3) Accountability

LEASE demonstrates accountability to:

- Parliament, through:
 - LEASE's annual report, which is placed in the library of the Houses of Parliament by DCLG;
 - Annual auditing of LEASE and Lease Conferences Limited's accounts by external auditors;
 - Periodic reports to DCLG on staff and general expenditure;
 - The Chief Executive, who acts as LEASE's Accounting Officer appointed by DCLG, and meets on a quarterly basis with DCLG officials to report on LEASE's performance;
- The public, by publishing information about our performance, expenditure, senior salaries, events and organisational structure.

In addition, LEASE demonstrates its accountability by:

- Publishing minutes of board meetings;
- Holding a stakeholder forum;
- Commissioning its external auditors to conduct a mid-year review of our internal financial controls;
- Having simple and accessible complaints procedures.

4) Openness and transparency

LEASE is committed to openness and demonstrates this through its publication policy where there is a presumption that transparency and openness are to prevail unless there is a clear and legitimate basis for the information not to be disclosed.

5) The board

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government appoints board members, including the Chair. The Commissioner for Public Appointments oversees each appointment. Board members are also bound by the Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies

The board is ultimately responsible for all that LEASE does. In order for LEASE to discharge its responsibilities appropriately and effectively, day-to-day operational management is delegated to the Chief Executive. A number of matters, however, remain reserved to the board. These are:

- determining the overall strategic direction of LEASE within available resources and approving the corporate and business plans;
- monitoring the performance of the Chief Executive and his management team, and holding them to account for the exercise of their delegated powers and delivery against plans and budgets;
- approving the annual budget; and
- organisational policies.

The board has established clear levels of delegated authority to the Chief Executive (See Annex: Delegation of Authority to Chief Executive) within which:

- some decisions are reserved to the board;
- the Chief Executive is empowered to make decisions and delegate authority within LEASE staff for the day-to-day operation of LEASE; and
- the Chief Executive is required to escalate high risk and /or high impact issues for the timely attention and consideration of the board.

The board will approve policies for the efficient and effective management of LEASE's funds and management and development, at the strategic level, of its staff.

The board will evaluate its own performance on an annual basis, examining its impact and effectiveness and any improvements required in its organisation or operation and individual board members will be appraised annually.

Board meetings

- The board meets formally at least six times a year. The conduct of formal board meetings is determined by the board and is set out in LEASE's Articles of Association.
- An Audit Committee and a Remuneration Committee support the board.

6) The Chair

The Chair is responsible with the other board members for the corporate responsibilities set out in paragraph 5 above, and in particular for ensuring that LEASE fulfils the aims and objectives set by DCLG and the Welsh Government.

The Chair has particular responsibility for providing effective strategic leadership of the following matters:

- Formulating the board's strategy for discharging its duties;
- Encouraging high standards of propriety and promoting the efficient and effective use of staff and other resources throughout LEASE;
- Representing the views of the board to the general public;
- Ensuring that the board, in reaching decisions, takes proper account of guidance provided by DCLG or the Welsh Government;
- Providing an annual assessment of performance of individual board members, and in particular when they are being considered for re-appointment to the board; and
- Appointing, in consultation with the board and with the Secretary of State's approval (including the performance objectives and remuneration terms), a Chief Executive for LEASE and Lease Conferences Limited.

When board vacancies arise the Chair is responsible for advising the sponsor team within DCLG of the needs of LEASE with a view to ensuring a proper balance of professional, financial and other expertise that may be necessary.

7) The Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has delegated authority for the day-to-day management of LEASE, and this means leading management and staff in:

- fulfilling LEASE's goals and objectives;
- developing plans, goals and policies for board approval;
- realising the board's strategies and plans for the future;
- delivering LEASE's services in line with targets and performance indicators agreed by the board;
- acting as LEASE's Accounting Officer, reporting to Parliament on LEASE's use of public funds and with personal accountability and responsibility for LEASE's propriety and regularity;
- prudent and economical administration;
- avoidance of waste and extravagance;
- efficient and effective use of available resources;
- providing accurate and timely information to enable the board to fulfil its governance responsibilities effectively; and
- the day-to-day organisation, staffing and management of LEASE; and, jointly with the Chair:
 - developing LEASE's relationships with key stakeholders;

- communicating LEASE's plans and achievements to stakeholders, including LEASE staff, English and Welsh governments and the public; and
- supporting the board in fulfilling their role and responsibilities as set out in this Governance and Delegation Framework.

ANNEX
Delegation of authority to Chief Executive

CATEGORY	AUTHORITY DELEGATED
Financial	
Operating expenditure (budgeted)	Full authority if part of a board approved budget
Operating expenditure (unbudgeted)	Subject to board approval
Bank accounts and signatories	Changes to bank accounts and signatories subject to Board approval
Accommodation changes or lease/MOTO renewals	Subject to board approval; NB MOTO must be signed by DCLG official.
Travel and subsistence	Full authority in accordance with current approved budget
Chief Executive's expenses	Audit Committee Chairman to authorise
Additional credit cards	Subject to board approval
Non-disclosure agreements	Subject to board approval and current DCLG policy
Governance	
Any change to the company structure (LEASE and Lease Conferences Ltd)	Subject to board approval
Any change to Governance and Delegation Framework	Subject to board approval
Organisational policies	Subject to board approval
Responses to government consultation	Subject to board approval
Staff	
Appointing staff	Full authority in accordance with current approved budget
Head count changes	Subject to board approval
Replacing existing positions	Full authority in accordance with current approved budget
Remuneration of staff	Subject to Remuneration Committee approval
Business related expenses claims	Full authority in accordance with current approved budget
Legal	
Obtaining legal advice in the normal course of business	Full authority
Settling litigation claims and legal disputes	Subject to board approval

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