

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Friday 28th April 2006

PRESENT : The Chair (John Lay), Councillor Murray, Judith Harley (Conservative Party representative), Chris Turner (Independent member), John Batey (Parish Council representative).

OFFICERS PRESENT : Jeremy Thomas (Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer), William Reed (Democratic Services Manager), Michael Lawrence (Strategic Director, Housing, Health and Community), Mike Newman (Head of Corporate Secretariat, Chief Executive's Business Unit).

34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the Vice-Chair (Professor Diana Woodhouse).

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Resolved to note the contents of the Guidance Note (previously circulated now appended) on declaring interest at meetings.

36. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

37. MINUTES

Resolved that the minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of the Committee held on 6th January 2006 be confirmed subject, in Minute 30 (MEMBER TRAINING) to the insertion of the words 'Parish Council' in place of the question marks in the first line.

With reference to Minute 25 (POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE AND CONSTITUTION REVIEW) resolved :-

- a) To note that the revisions to the Committee's powers and duties would be recommended to Council for approval at the Annual Meeting on 18th May 2006;
- b) To note that the reference to the Disciplinary and Grading Appeals Committee in the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations was a correct

reflection of the Councils' disciplinary process for staff (resolution (3)(b) refers);

- c) To note that the changes to the Whistleblowing Policy, the Protocol on Member / Officer Relations and the Planning Code of Practice would be submitted to Council in the context of the general review of the Council's Constitution;
- d) With reference to Minute 29 (STANDARDS OF CONDUCT IN ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE FUTURE), resolved to ask the Democratic Services Manager to establish the current position in relation to the review of the Members' Code of Conduct.

38. STANDARDS COMMITTEE – INDEPENDENT MEMBERS' FORUM

Chris Turner reported upon the proceedings of the Forum on 21st April 2006. 25 people had been present representing a variety of local authorities and other bodies that had Standards Committees.

He said that a representative from the Standards Board for England had addressed the meeting about the review of the Members' Code of Conduct. The consultation period upon the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Discussion Paper was due to come to an end in June. A revised Code was expected to be introduced by May 2007. A Local Government Bill picking up on other matters contained in the consultation that could only be introduced by primary legislation was expected in 2008. The Standards Board for England's representative had also advised that the Standards Board for England's Head Office was moving to Manchester.

On the Forum's own affairs, it had decided that it would meet every six months and that it was not in favour of becoming part of a national independent members' association. The next Forum meeting would be held in Swindon on 27th October 2006.

Resolved:-

- (1) to thank Chris Turner for attending the Independent Members' Forum and for reporting back;
- (2) to offer the City Council's offices for a meeting of the Forum in Spring 2007.

39. COMPLAINTS MONITORING AND OVERSEEING

The Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended).

Resolved:-

- (1) that this Committee should have complaints monitoring reports submitted to it twice a year, with the first one to be submitted to the Committee's June meeting;
- (2) that the format of the monitoring reports should be broadly similar to that submitted to the Community Scrutiny Committee and, because that Committee had no powers in respect of complaints monitoring, the report should henceforth primarily be submitted to this Committee.

40. STANDARDS BOARD DECISION

Resolved to receive and note the contents of a letter (previously circulated and now appended) from the Standards Board for England.

41. ACCESS TO INFORMATION – CHANGES

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended).

Resolved to note the contents of the report.

42. STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND CONFERENCE 2006

The Democratic Services Manager submitted details (previously circulated and now appended) of the Standards Boards for England's 2006 Conference due to be held in Birmingham on 16th and 17th October 2006.

Resolved that one member together with one officer should attend the Standards Board for England's 2006 Conference.

43. STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Monitoring Officer reported that the Annual Meeting of Council on 18th May 2006 would be asked to reappoint the Standards Committee for the Council Year 2006/07. Council would be asked to appoint at least four elected members of the City Council to the Committee and to agree revised powers and duties.

Resolved:-

- (1) to note that the Annual Meeting of Council would be invited to appoint City Councillors to represent the Party Groups at present represented on the Council and would not be invited to appoint representatives of political parties not currently represented on the Council;
- (2) to record that the Committee would like continuity of membership and for Council to bear in mind in appointing members to the Committee the

responsibility of the Committee to conduct hearings where members were alleged to have breached the Members' Code of Conduct.

44. DATES OF MEETINGS FOR THE COUNCIL YEAR 2006/07

Resolved to note that the Committee was scheduled to meet on the following dates in the Council Year 2006/07, all starting at 10.30 a.m.:-

Friday 9th June 2006
Friday 8th September 2006
Friday 1st December 2006
Friday 9th March 2007

45. RETIRING MEMBERS

Resolved to thank Judith Harley and Val Smith for their contribution to the work of the Committee in the time they had served upon it.