

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**Friday 9th March 2007 at 10.30 a.m.
in the Town Hall**

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Council's Constitution does not permit substitutes.

2. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

The Council's Constitution provides that membership of the Standards Committee shall consist of one member of each political group represented on the Council. Following the Council meeting on 12th February a Councillor resigned from the Liberal Democrat Group and she and the member not aligned to any political group have given notice that they wish to be known as the Independent Group. Councillor Sargent of that Group will be the Group's representative on the Committee.

3. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 1st December 2006 (circulated, page 1).

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Guidance note (circulated page 5)

5. URGENT BUSINESS

Items of business notified to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services by no later than 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday 7th March 2007 and which, in the opinion of the Chair should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency by reason of special circumstances.

6. OMBUDSMAN REPORT – PLANNING MATTER

- (a) Ombudsman report (circulated, page 6).
- (b) Report (circulated, page 8) Of the Chief Executive.

7. OMBUDSMAN REPORT – HOUSING RENTS

Report (circulated, page 18) of the Chief Executive

8. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

Report (circulated, page 20) of the Monitoring Officer

9. STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND – DECISION NOTICE

Report (circulated, page 54) of the Monitoring Officer

10. STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND – INVESTIGATIONS

Report (circulated, page 58) of the Monitoring Officer

11. COMPLAINTS MONITORING – REVENUES AND BENEFITS

Report (circulated, page 60) of the Chief Executive

12. INDEPENDENT MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL'S STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Officer reports that the Council is currently advertising that there are vacancies for independent members on the Standards Committee and that we are inviting applications. The closing date for applications is 16th March and we are envisaging interviews of short-listed applicants in the week beginning 26th March. Officers favour interviews being conducted on either Thursday 29th March or Friday 30th March. The Committee needs to decide upon the composition of an interviewing panel and the Monitoring Officer will report further.

13. FORTHCOMING EVENTS

(a) Standards Board Conference

The Standards Board for England's 2007 Annual Assembly will be held in Birmingham on 15-16th October. In previous years, in addition to officer attendance, one member of the Committee has been appointed to attend. Booking details will be sent out to local authorities shortly. A provisional booking will be made for one member and the Committee is invited to consider who to appoint to attend the Conference. Alternatively, the Committee may wish to defer reaching a decision until its June meeting, the first meeting in the new Council Year.

(b) Standards Board Roadshows

The Standards Board for England is arranging roadshows across the country in June of this year. The purpose of the roadshows is twofold. First, to introduce the revised Code of Conduct (see agenda item 8). Second, to discuss any concerns there might be about the local filter system for complaints, likely to become operative in 2008. The venues most conveniently located to Oxford are Birmingham on 14th June, Swindon on 26th June and London on 28th June. Further details will be made available as soon as they are received.

(c) Independent Members' Forum

The next meeting of this Forum will be held on Friday 20th April at the offices of West Berkshire Council in Newbury.

(d) County Council Standards Committee

The County Council's Standards Committee is holding a stakeholder workshop on 21st March 2007 at County Hall to assist it in drawing up a work programme for the year that "reflects issues which most concern stakeholders and the wider community". The Committee would like to identify three or four things to focus upon in the next Council Year. The Leader of the City Council has been invited to attend but is unable to. The Committee is asked if it wishes to nominate a representative to attend on the Council's behalf and/or to submit suggestions for inclusion in the work programme.

14. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Council has set the following dates meetings of the Committee in the Council Year 2007/08 (provided there is business to warrant holding a meeting):-

- Friday 8th June 2007

- Friday 7th September 2007
- Friday 7th December 2007
- Friday 7th March 2008

Council asked that the first meetings of Committees in the new Council Year should consider their start times. The current start time of this Committee is 10.30 am. If the Committee wishes to change its start time it should be aware that Town Hall accommodation is in considerable demand for meetings and other purposes and it may not be possible to accommodate significant changes in meeting arrangements (eg. from the morning to the afternoon or vice versa).

The Committee is asked at what time it would like its meetings to commence in the Council Year 2007/08. However, in order to comply with Council's wishes, the Committee will be asked in June, in the light of membership agreed at the Annual Meeting, to confirm or otherwise its future start times.

If you have any enquiries about this agenda please contact:-

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