

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Friday 12th June 2009

PRESENT: The Chair (John Lay), Councillors Brundin and Smith; Chris Ballinger, Meryll Dean and Martin Gardner (independent members); Fred Mogridge (parish council representative).

COUNCIL OFFICERS PRESENT: Jeremy Thomas (Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer), William Reed (Democratic Services Manager), Helen Lynch and Cathryn Yeagers (Legal and Democratic Services), Mike Newman (Corporate Secretariat).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE COUNCIL YEAR 2009/10

John Lay was elected Chair of the Committee for the Council Year 2009/10.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR FOR THE COUNCIL YEAR 2009/10

Anne Gwinnet was elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the Council Year 2009/10.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sanders, Anne Gwinnet (independent member) and Paul Phipps (Parish Council representative)

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Brundin said, in relation to agenda item 11 (Annual Audit and Inspection letter 2007/08, minute 10) that he had been chair of the Audit and Governance Committee during 2008/09 including on 24th March when the Committee had considered the annual audit and inspection letter.

5. POWERS AND DUTIES

Resolved:-

- (1) To receive and note the list ((previously circulated and now appended) of the Committee's powers and duties, noting that the

references to section numbers were to sections of the Council's Constitution;

- (2) That the list of powers and duties be modified as follows:-
 - (a) change the word "on" to "or" in item (e);
 - (b) add as a new, lettered item the words "To consider the granting of dispensations to officers for politically restricted posts".

6. MINUTES

- (1) Resolved that the minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of the Committee held on 6th March 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.
- (2) With reference to minute 46 (c) that dealt with a regular meeting between the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee and the Chief Executive and Leader, the Democratic Services Manager said that an agreed date had not yet been identified but that he hoped to notify all parties shortly.

Resolved to note the position.

- (3) With reference to minute 48 (COMPLAINTS MONITORING - PROGRESS) Mike Newman said that it had not been possible to submit a report to this meeting of the Committee. He intended to submit a report to the Committee's September meeting.

Resolved to note the position.

- (4) With reference to minute 54 (ASSESSMENT AND HEARINGS TRAINING FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERS) the Monitoring Officer said that he would report to the next meeting on the matter of pre-hearings for local determinations.

Resolved to note the position.

- (5) With reference to minute 55 as it related to the Standards Board's Annual Assembly, resolved to note that Martin Gardner would let the Democratic Services Manager know if he was able to attend any or all of the Assembly.

7. CODE OF CONDUCT AND OTHER TRAINING FOR MEMBERS

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended). He said that Code training and

Standards familiarisation had been scheduled for three dates, namely 22nd June between 3.00 p.m. and 5.00 p.m., 3rd July between 9.00 a.m. and 11.00 a.m. and 8th July between 5.00 p.m. and 7.00 p.m.

Resolved to note the position.

8. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT BY COUNCILLORS – ASSESSMENT PANELS 2008/09

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended).

Resolved:-

- (1) That the considerations in paragraph 5 of the report should continue to be used by assessment panels;
- (2) To note that if local criteria seemed to have emerged by the end of the current Council Year the Head of Legal and Democratic Services would report to the June 2010 Standards Committee;
- (3) To note that from now on the Monitoring Officer would advise members when a Code of Conduct complaint was received about them;
- (4) That the Annual Report on the work of the Standards Committee should emphasise the work of officers in supporting the local assessment regime;
- (5) To note, on the decisions of the assessment panel to take other action (case reference 703/4/14), that guidance on the matter issued by the Standards Board would be presented to the Committee in September.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended).

Resolved:-

- (1) That the work programme items “Committee Effectiveness and Profile” and “Planning Code of Conduct Review” that appeared for September and December respectively be transposed;
- (2) On independent members forums matters that appeared in the work programme for today’s meeting, to note that a paper was awaited on the future of the forum;

- (3) On the work programme item “Committee Effectiveness and Profile” to ask that, among other things, the websites for the short listed candidates for the Local Government Chronicle Standards and Ethics Award be visited to look at any best practice that was revealed on the websites that the City Council might follow;
- (4) To note the Planning and Member Codes appended to the work programme and to ask members of the Committee to let the Democratic Services Manager have comments, if any, in advance of consideration of the Codes by the Committee’s meeting in September, and at this stage to note comments on certain paragraphs of the Member / Officer Relations Code, namely on paragraph 24.15 to make the reference to notification to members about matters affecting their Ward more specific, and on paragraph 24.16 (b) to add references to basic employment obligations and to training for members on interviewing.

10. ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER – 2007/08

The Democratic Services Manager submitted the Annual Audit and Inspection letter for 2007/08 (previously circulated and now appended) and the minute (also previously circulated and now appended) of the Audit and Governance Committee that had considered the letter.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained, in response to questions, that although the letter did not go into any detail on ethics and governance, a “use of resources” assessment had to be prepared that dealt with these matters and there were certain “key lines of inquiry” that related directly to ethics and governance.

In response to further questions, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services said that he would check whether the use of resources assessment covered the Council’s dealings on complaints.

Resolved to receive the report and to note its contents.

11. STANDARDS BOARD BULLETIN

Resolved to receive and note the contents of the Standards Board’s Bulletin 43 (previously circulated and now appended).

12. DATE OF NEXT ORDINARY MEETING

Resolved to note that the date of the Committee's next ordinary meeting was Friday 11th September 2009 at 3.00 p.m.

The meeting commenced at 9.30 a.m. and closed at 10.50 a.m.