

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Friday 5 March 2010

PRESENT: The Chair (John Lay), Councillors Dhall and Smith; Chris Ballinger and Martin Gardner (Independent Members), Nils Bartleet and Fred Mogridge (Parish Council Representatives)

COUNCIL OFFICERS PRESENT: Jeremy Thomas (Head of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer); Helen Lynch and Alec Dubberley (Law and Governance).

47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brundin and Sanders, Meryll Dean and Anne Gwinnett.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Smith declared a personal interest in agenda items 6 (Draft Annual Report) and 8 (Assessment Panel Update).

49. MINUTES

RESOLVED that subject to the inclusion of Councillor Dhall and Fred Mogridge in the list of those present at the 21 January 2010 meeting, the minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings held on 4 December 2009 and 21 January 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

By way of an update to minute 33, the Head of Law and Governance reported that the Customer Relationship Management system was being rolled out across the Council with all services areas being given access to input instances of customer contact. This would enable all customer contacts to be tracked throughout the authority. The committee welcomed this.

50. PARISH COUNCIL MATTERS

The Chair formally welcomed Nils Bartleet, Parish Council Representative, to his first meeting of the Committee.

The Head of Law and Governance reported verbally that a meeting with Parish Council Representatives had recently been held. The meeting provided an opportunity for Parish Councils to raise issues of concern with City Council officers. There would be a further such meeting later in the year.

51. STANDARDS COMMITTEE JOINT TRAINING

The Head of Law and Governance reported verbally on the recently held county-wide training event. The event was well attended and featured model case studies for participants to assess. Members felt it would be useful for the handouts to be circulated to the committee as a learning tool.

RESOLVED to request that officers provide the handouts from the training event to the next Committee meeting.

52. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) presenting, for the Committee's approval, the draft annual report due to be presented to the Annual Meeting of Council. The Committee discussed the report and recommended a number of changes.

Regarding the proposed website (paragraph 42 of the draft report refers) the committee put forward various suggestions for content.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the report should have cross references to the guidance issued by Standards for England;
- (2) That paragraph 13 should be amended to make clear that the Full Committee must meet to consider investigations;
- (3) That paragraph 41 should be re worded to include Political Group Leaders at the regular meetings with the Chief Executive and Leader;
- (4) That the website content should be made available in paper form for residents unable to access the internet and that consideration should be given to placing an article about the Committee's work in a future edition of the "Your Oxford" magazine; and
- (5) That the "mock complaints" circulated at the joint training event should be placed on the website as a useful tool to members of the public.

53. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Head of Law and Governance reported that several Independent and City Council members' terms of office would expire in the coming months. The required advertising of the vacancies would be undertaken shortly.

The Committee noted the position.

54. ASSESSMENT PANEL ANALYSIS

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) giving a summary of Assessment Panel work since the last ordinary meeting.

It was noted that no particular trends or patterns could be identified as the complaints received were not similar in nature.

The Committee noted the report.

55. STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND PUBLICATIONS

The Head of Law and Governance submitted various publications (previously circulated, now appended) issued by Standards for England.

Resolved to note the content of the publications.

56. WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2010/11

The Committee agreed that a draft work programme should be submitted to the June meeting of the Committee.

57. COUNCIL BUDGET 2010/11

The Head of Law and Governance briefly updated the Committee on the authority's budgetary position for the next financial year. He reported that the work of the Committee would be unaffected by this year's budget as no staffing changes were anticipated in Law and Governance.

The Committee noted the position.

43. DATE OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2010/11 COUNCIL YEAR

The Committee noted that the dates of meetings for the next Council year as follows:

11 June 2010
10 September 2010
10 December 2010
11 March 2011

It was agreed to decide on the times for the meetings after the District Council elections.

The meeting commenced at 3.15 pm and closed at 4.20pm.