

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Thursday 8th October 2009

PRESENT – *Councillors K Foster, Humphrys and J Williams.*

PARISH COUNCIL MEMBER – *Councillor Malowana-Murphy and Councillor Simpson*

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE – *Mr L Loft (Chair), Mrs S Entwistle, , Mr B Kiernan, , Mrs V Webb and Mrs V Miles.*

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE- *Janie Berry (Deputy Monitoring Officer) and Paul Jones (Head of Democratic Services).*

RESOLUTIONS

15 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed Councillor Simpson to his first Meeting of the Committee. Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Z. Khan and Graham, Mr Z Aziz. Ms H Kaur-Kalkat.

16 Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on 23rd July 2009

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 23rd July 2009 be approved and signed as a correct record.

17 Declarations of Interest

Declarations of prejudicial interests were made by Valerie Webb, Sue Entwistle and Valerie Miles and they left the meeting whilst the Committee considered their requests to continue as Members of the Committee. (Minute 23 refers).

18 Matters Arising

At its last meeting the Committee had considered the outcome of the research exercise undertaken by Standards for England to assess the satisfaction of local government with the performance of the Standards Board for England. Several issues and concerns had been raised and on behalf of the Committee the Chair had written to Standards for England.

A copy of the response from Standards for England was submitted.

RESOLVED:

That response from Standards for England be noted.

19 Verbal Update on the Work Programme

The Chair gave feedback on a series of meetings that he and the Director of Legal Services had had with the Chief Executive and Group leaders about adopting a framework for the promotion of good ethical governance and the role of this Committee. The purpose of those meetings had been to explain what was intended and how the project would be delivered.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that the framework would include the following:-

- An increased public awareness of the role of the Standards Committee
- The development of an “ethical standards road show”
- Regular features to be printed in the Shuttle and Teamtalk
- Awareness raising at Council meetings e.g. Executive Board etc.
- A new webpage or website for this Committee.

The next stage of the process would be to hold a meeting of the Task Group to take these issues forward.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

20 Presentation by the Director of Business Transformation and Information Technology on IT Usage Policy for Councillors and Staff

The Director of Business Transformation and Information Technology gave a brief presentation on the revised Acceptable IT Usage Policy for Councillors and Staff that was being rolled out.

The revised policy was in response to the GovConnect Initiative. This mandatory project requires all Councils to comply with a set of stringent controls to protect information and provide a secure public sector network. Revised management controls and usage policies covering the entire IT estate and all information across the Council were needed to ensure the Council met the minimum standards set.

In response to a series of questions about the implications of the revised Acceptable IT Usage Policy for Councillors the Director of Business Transformation and Information Technology gave responses and made statements on the different matters raised.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

21 Standards For England Corporate Plan 2009/12

The Director of Legal Services submitted a report on the Standards for England Corporate Plan 2009/12.

The Plan set out the mission and objectives for Standards for England on a three-year rolling basis and is updated every year. The Plan took stock of its performance over the past 12 months and looked forward to the challenges and opportunities of the coming years.

A copy of the Standards for England Corporate Plan was submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

22 North West Independent Members Forum

The Director of Legal Services submitted a report on the North West Independent Members Forum

The Forum was established to give Independent Members of Standards Committees a support network and the opportunity to meet with colleagues from other Councils to discuss standards issues. Presently the Lead Authority for the Forum was Lancashire County Council.

Lancashire County Council has reviewed its position as lead authority and had reluctantly concluded that it was unable to continue providing secretarial support to the Forum.

On behalf of the Forum Lancashire County Council was seeking expressions of interest for an authority to host the next meeting and provide support. At the next meeting of the Forum agreement would be sought from Forum members on the future appointment and term of office of convener, secretarial support and future venues.

RESOLVED:

1. That Lancashire County Council be informed that that Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council are unable to support the Forum.

23 Communications

Standards Board Bulletin: 45

The newsletter was submitted for information.

Resignation of Mr Hodgkiss

The Committee were informed that Mr Hodgkiss had resigned from the Committee. A letter of thanks had been sent on behalf of the Committee by the Chair.

Membership of the Committee

The Head of Democratic Services gave an update on the terms of office of the independent members serving on this Committee.

The Terms of Office of Valerie Webb and Sue Entwistle were scheduled to conclude on 24th November 2009 and Valerie Miles on 4th December 2009. The Head of Democratic Services advised that under the Local Assessment Framework guidance that authorities were recommended that independent members should serve for a maximum period of eight years. Therefore all three members were eligible to serve for a further period of office.

On behalf of the Committee the Chair extended to each of the members an invitation to continue for further terms of office. All three indicated that they wished to continue and left the room while their requests were considered.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Group Leaders be requested to confirm the appointments of the following Independent Members for the Terms stated:-

Valerie Webb and Sue Entwistle until 24th November 2013; and
Valerie Miles until 4th December 2012.

2. That Valerie Webb be appointed to attend the Annual Standards Conference on behalf of this Committee.

Recruitment Process for New Members

The Head of Democratic Services reported that an expression of interest had been received for the vacant Parish member position and that a recruitment process would be undertaken in respect of the one remaining vacant independent member position.

24 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on Thursday 7th January 2010. At this meeting a training session will be held for Committee Members.

Signed.....

Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were signed

Date.....