

## Standards Committee

A meeting of Standards Committee was held on Thursday, 31st July, 2008.

**Present:** Mr F W Hayes (Chairman), Mrs E Chapman (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Ken Dixon, Mrs F Robinson (Independent); Mr C Nestor (Substitutue Independent); Mr R Mosley (Substitute Parish Representative)

**Officers:** D E Bond, A Squires, S Johnson, K Wannop (LD); I Jones (RES)

**Also in attendance:** Cllr John Fletcher

**Apologies:** Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Ian Dalgarno; Mr C V Algie (Parish Representative), Mr T Bowman (Parish Representative)

### **S**      **Declarations of Interest**

**48/08**

All Members present declared a personal/non-prejudicial interest in the item entitled Internal Audit Quarterly Report in view of the reference to members allowances.

### **S**      **Minutes of the meetings held on 8th May 08 and 5th June 08**

**49/08**

The minutes of the meetings held on 8th May 2008 and 5th June 2008 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **S**      **Internal Audit Quarterly Report**

**50/08**

Consideration was given to a report that advised the Standards Committee of the work carried out by the Internal Audit Section in one audit within the remit of the Committee during the quarter April to June 2008.

Members of the Committee were reminded that Internal Audit was an independent appraisal function established by the Council to objectively examine, evaluate and report on the adequacy of internal controls. This role ensured that there was proper economic, efficient and effective use of resources. It also ensured that the Council had adequate accounting records and control systems.

The Chief Internal Auditor presented the Committee with details of an audit relating to members allowances/travel and subsistences and the number of recommendations made.

The Committee discussed the current guidance available on members allowances/travel and subsistences. Concerns were raised as to whether the guidance was up to date and whether all Members knew where to access a copy. It was agreed that it would be timely to review the content of the guidance to ensure that it was up to date. The Committee requested that Officers undertake a review.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report of performance be noted.
2. Officers be requested to undertake a review of the members

allowances/travel and subsistences guidance.

**S Attendance at Town/Parish Council Meetings**

**51/08**

Consideration was given to a report that gave details of the attendance of the Committee at pre-arranged visits to Town/Parish councils and also gave details of outstanding visits.

The Committee was asked to consider the details and to agree who would attend the meetings concerned by contacting the Monitoring Officer following the meeting with expressions of interest.

RESOLVED

1. That the information be noted.

2. Members of the Standards Committee provide the Monitoring Officer with their availability for the meetings shown.

**S Comments, Commendations and Complaints - Third and Fourth Quarters of 2007/08**

**52/08**

Consideration was given to a report that gave details of comments, commendations and complaints for the third and fourth quarters of 2007/08.

Members were informed that during the third quarter of 2007/08 (October 2007 to December 2007 inclusively), the Authority had received 242 complaints and 434 commendations.

Members received the breakdown of these complaints and commendations.

Members were informed that during the fourth quarter (January to March 2008) the Authority had received 220 complaints (compared to 226 in the same quarter last year) and 348 commendations (compared to 372 in the same quarter last year).

Members also received a breakdown of these complaints and commendations. The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that some of the main messages for the year were as follows:-

- The number of complaints received for the whole of 2007/08 was 863. This compared to 825 in 2006/07.

- A total of 1607 commendations were received during the year. This compared to 1749 last year.

- On average almost 75% of complaints were in relation to CESC, DANS and Tristar.

- Of the total commendations almost 82% were received for CESC and DANS.

- Within CESC the majority of complaints were within Children and Young People and the majority of commendations were within adult services.

- Within DANS the complaints were evenly spread across Direct Services and Community Protection, while the majority of commendations were within Direct Services (eg street cleansing, refuse, horticultural services etc).

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

**S  
53/08**      **Summary of Allegations of Misconduct Determined by the Standards Board for England and Cases referred for Local Assessment/Investigation**

Consideration was given to a report that gave details of allegations of misconduct determined by the standards board for England and cases referred for local assessment/investigation.

Members were reminded that there were currently two allegations being investigated locally following referrals from Ethical Standards Officers. It was noted that these matters would be the subject of reports to the Standards Committee in due course.

The Committee was informed that since the local assessment arrangements came into force on 8 May two complaints had been received and considered by the Assessment Sub-Committee during the first quarter (period ending 30 June 2008). Members were provided with details of these cases as part of the Sub-Committee minutes.

RESOLVED the the information be received.

**S  
54/08**      **Ethical Governance - Audit/Light Touch Health Check - 2007/08 Outturn**

Consideration was given to a report that provided Committee Members with details on the Ethical governance - audit/light touch health check - 2007/08 outturn.

As previously reported to Committee, progress against the ethical governance audit and IDeA light touch health check action plans had been monitored throughout 2007/08.

The Committee were provided with a schedule which incorporated all of the key targets from the audit and health check action plans and outlined the progress against each target and the overall 2007/08 outturn performance.

RESOLVED that the progress against the action plans be noted.

**S  
55/08**      **Local Assessment - Case Studies**

Members considered two case studies from an LGG Local Assessment Workshop.

Members of the Committee considered the two allegations and provided their views on whether there had been an apparent breach of the code and, if so, whether they considered that further action was necessary.

The Committee was provided with a copy of the Local Assessment Complaint

Handling Flowchart and also a copy of the Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

**S  
56/08**      **Local Assessment Framework**

Committee Members received and considered the following information relating to the Local Assessment Framework:

1. Local Assessment Complaint handling flowchart
2. Local Assessment Monitoring Officer Protocol
3. Assessment Sub-Committee Terms of Reference
4. Review Sub-Committee Terms of Reference
5. Consideration Sub-Committee Terms of Reference
6. Assessment Criteria - Revised Version
7. Local Assessment - Some Key Issues

The Committee was asked to consider and approve the documents at Items 2-6.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The information be noted.
2. The Local Assessment Monitoring Officer Protocol be approved.
3. The Assessment Sub-Committee Terms of Reference be approved.
4. The Review Sub-Committee Terms of Reference be approved.
5. The Consideration Sub-Committee Terms of Reference be approved
6. The Assessment Criteria-Revised Version be approved.

**S  
57/08**      **Information/Discussion Items**

Members of the Committee received and considered the following information:

1. Local Government Ombudsman Annual Letter 2007/08
2. Standards Board Bulletin 39
3. Weightmans - Ethical Standards Clinic
4. Standards Board Annual Review 2007/08
5. Bevan Brittan - Authority Alert - Redcar and Cleveland BC Case

6. Standards Committee Membership

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

**S**  
**58/08**

**Standards Committee Forward Plan 2008/2009**

Consideration was given to the new version of the Standards Committee Forward Plan.

RESOLVED that the Standards Committee Forward Plan be noted.