

Standards Committee

A meeting of Standards Committee was held on Thursday, 20th November, 2008.

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

Officers: D.E Bond, A. Squires, S. Johnson, K. Wannop(LD)

Also in attendance: Cllr John Fletcher

Apologies: Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Mr C.V Algje(Parish Representative)

S **Declarations of Interest**

87/08

There were no declarations of interest.

S **Internal Audit Report - September 2008**

88/08

Consideration was given to a report that advised the Standards Committee Members of the work carried out by the Internal Audit Section in four audits within the remit of the Committee during the quarter July to September 2008.

Members 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 ensures that the Council had adequate accounting records and control systems.

The Chief Internal Auditor presented the Committee with details of audits relating to Assurance Statements, Data Protection/RIPA/FOI and Officer Payments/Travel & Subsistence/Car Loans and Xentrall Shared Services Governance.

RESOLVED that the report of performance be noted.

S **Attendance at Council Meetings**

89/08

Consideration was given to a report which indicated that in addition to attending Town/Parish Council meetings, the Ethical Governance light touch health check highlighted observing Council meetings as important in terms of Standards Committee member development and raising the Committee's and Members' profiles

The Committee was reminded that the last occasion Standards Committee Members had attended and reported back on their observations of Council meetings was in December 2007. It was therefore considered opportune, particularly in light of changes in Committee membership, to begin the process again.

The Committee was provided with details of forthcoming Planning, Licensing and Scrutiny Committee meetings. The aim would be to have two Committee

members attending two meetings of each Committee during the period December 2008 to March 2009 (or a little later insofar as the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee was concerned).

RESOLVED that Committee Members provide the Director of Law and Democracy with the meeting dates that they could attend and that, subject to this, arrangements be made for such attendance to take place.

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90/08 **Local Assessment - Case Studies**

The Committee considered two case studies from the recent Standard's Committees' Assembly.

Members of the Committee considered and discussed 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.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

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91/08 **Local Assessment Framework**

The Committee received and considered the following information in relation to the Local Assessment Framework:-

1. Standards Committee Sub-Committee Minutes
2. APE Decision - APE 401 - Milton Keynes Council
3. Referrals to APE for determination
4. Weightmans - Ethical Standards Clinic
5. Investigations - Key Points
6. Local Assessment - Administration/Procedural Issues

RESOLVED that the information be noted/received.

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92/08 **Codes of Conduct for Local Authority Members and Employees - A Consultation**

Consideration was given to and a discussion took place on a report on Codes of Conduct for Local Authority Members and Employees - A Consultation.

The Committee discussed the list of consultation questions at Annex A of the

document and agreed proposed responses to the questions.

RESOLVED that the Committee's comments be formulated into a response to the specific consultation issues and that they be finalised in consultation with the Chair and the agreed responses be submitted to CLG before the consultation response deadline.

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93/08**

Information/Discussion Items

The Committee considered the following reports:-

1. Seventh Annual Assembly of Standards Committees - Delivering the Goods - 13 and 14 October 2008
 - a. Various Documents from the Standards Committees' Assembly
 - b. Feedback from Chris Nestor (Independent Member)
 - c. Speech by Sadiq Khan MP - Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
 - d. Investigations - Further Key Points
2. Local Government Ombudsman report - London Borough of Greenwich
3. Local Government Ombudsman report - Oswestry Borough Council

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

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94/08**

Standards Committee Forward Plan 2008/09

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

RESOLVED that the Standards Committee Forward Plan be noted/received.