

## Standards Committee

A meeting of Standards Committee was held on Thursday, 12th February, 2009.

**Present:** Mr F W Hayes(Chairman), Mrs E Chapman(Vice-Chairman), Mr Tom Bowman(Parish Representative), Mr Chris Nestor(Substitute Independent), Mrs Freda Robinson(Independent).

**Officers:** D.E Bond, A.Squirres, M.Henderson, K.Wannop(LD)

**Also in attendance:** None

**Apologies:** Cllr Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr John Fletcher(Substitute Member), Mr C.V Algie(Parish Representative), Mr Rodger Mosley(Substitute Parish Representative)

### **S       Declarations of Interest**

**117/08**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **S       Minutes of the Meetings held on 20th November 2008 and 19th December 2008.**

**118/08**

Minutes of the Meetings held on 20th November 2008 and 19th December 2008 were signed by the chairman as a correct record.

### **S       Review Sub Committee Minutes**

**119/08**

Members received the minutes of the meeting held on 28th January 2009.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

### **S       Internal Audit Report - December 2008**

**120/08**

Consideration was given to a report that advised Standards Committee Members of the work carried out by the Internal Audit Section in two audits within the remit of the Committee during the quarter October to December 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 ensured that the Council had adequate accounting records and control systems.

Members were provided with details of two audits undertaken by the Internal Audit Section during quarter 3:-

- Adhoc – Enforcement Officer – The Committee noted that this involved an investigation into a complaint by a local taxi driver, who alleged he was being victimised by Council Parking Enforcement Officers. The investigation concluded that the allegations were unfounded and all officers had acted appropriately. The complaint was subsequently withdrawn.

- Risk Management and Risk Register – The Committee noted that this was an important part of the Council’s Corporate Governance process. Recommendations coming from the audit related to the maintenance of registers, within services, and what challenge existed to ensure risks were appropriately scored and categorised. This was particularly important in order to ensure that the Council’s Corporate Risk Register, which detailed the Council’s most significant risks, was accurate. A recommendation also requested that officers provide more information on risk assessment within reports to Members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**S**  
**121/08**      **Observing Council Meetings**

The Committee was informed that the following meetings had been attended:-

- Planning Committee on 26th November 2008 was attended by Mr C. Nestor.
- Licensing Committee on 20th January 2009 was attended by Mr F.W Hayes and Mrs F. Robinson.
- Housing and Community Safety Select Committee on 29th January 2009 was attended by Mr F. W Hayes and Mrs F. Robinson.

Assessment sheets from the meetings were distributed to the Committee and discussed. Members were satisfied that the Committee meetings were currently operating appropriately, and the Committee asked that this be passed on to the relevant Chairmen.

RESOLVED that information be noted.

**S**  
**122/08**      **Local Assessment - Case Studies**

Members agreed that it would be more appropriate for this to be considered at a future meeting of the Committee, with more Members present.

**S**  
**123/08**      **Local Assessment Framework**

The Committee were asked to consider the following information regarding the Local Assessment Framework:-

1. A complaint about the local assessment procedure
2. Assessment decisions - performance monitoring

Members asked that performance monitoring regarding Review Sub-Committees be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

1. The information be noted.
2. Performance monitoring information, for Review Sub-Committees, be brought to a future meeting.

**S Information/Discussion Items**

**124/08**

Members of the Committee considered the following reports:-

1. Queen v Harrogate Borough Council and Mr & Mrs Atkinson - Bias
- 2.a. Consultation Paper on Codes of Conduct for Members and Officers - ACSeS Response
- b. Letter to Communities and Local Government
3. NALC - Stepping Stones Events
4. Guidance for elected members - Companies Act 2006
5. Review of Area Partnerships
6. Town and Parish Councils ethical governance workshop
7. Standards Board Survey
8. Standards Committee membership update
9. Adjudication Panel decision - APE 0406

Item 1, above, related to a case of apparent bias by a Planning Committee Chairman. The circumstances of the case did not constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct by the member concerned. However, the Local Government Ombudsman considered that the apparent bias had resulted in maladministration and, following a judicial review, a Court took the view that there had been a real possibility of bias and the decision by the Planning Committee was quashed. The Committee considered that the information provided about the case might be useful to the Members of Stockton's Planning Committee.

The Committee was informed that, regarding item 5 - Review of Area Partnerships a report would be submitted to Cabinet which included governance issues for Area Partnership Boards and the development of Action Plans in this regard.

Members were also informed that the Standards Board Survey needed to be completed by 16th February 2009.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

**S Standards Committee Forward Plan 2008/2010**

**125/08**

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

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

