

Standards Committee

A meeting of Standards Committee was held on Friday, 5th June, 2009.

Present: Mr F W Hayes(Chairman), Mrs E Chapman(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Mr T. Bowman(Parish Representative), Mr C.V Algie(Parish Representative), Mrs F. Robinson(Independent), Cllr John Fletcher(Substitute Member) Mr R. Mosley(Substitute Parish Representative), Mr C. Nestor(Substitute Independent)

Officers: Mr D.E Bond, Mr A. Squires, Mr M. Henderson, Miss K. Wannop(LD)

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Andrew Sherris

S **Declarations of Interest**

20/09

There were no declarations of interest.

S **Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th March 2009.**

21/09

Minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2009 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

S **Observing Council Meetings**

22/09

The Committee was informed that the following meetings had been attended:-
- Council on 6th May 2009 attended by Francis Hayes and Chris Nestor.
- Cabinet on 14th May 2009 attended by Edna Chapman and Tom Bowman.
- Planning 20th May 2009 attended by Francis Hayes and Roger Mosley.

The Committee discussed the assessment sheets from the above mentioned meetings. Members agreed that there were no concerns and it was considered that the meetings had operated well, and that this should be passed back to the relevant council members and officers.

RESOLVED that

1. appropriate feedback be provided to the relevant members and officers
2. the information be noted.

S **Review of Internal Audit Service**

23/09

The Committee considered a report that provided details of the review of the Internal Audit Service for 2008/09.

Members were informed that under the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2006 (Regulation 6) an in house review of the Internal Audit service should be carried out each year. This was the report of the third such review and followed that reported to the Audit Committee on 14th April 2008. It had been conducted under the auspices of the Corporate Governance Group. Two members of the Group had reviewed evidence and had formulated conclusions, findings and recommendations regarding the service.

The process had involved the following:-

- detailed consideration of the previous report, conclusions and recommendations
- a further assessment of the service against CIPFA's Code of Practice for internal Audit Checklist and a review of evidence to support relevant outcomes within the checklist
- interviews with the Chief Internal Auditor
- a discussion with the Audit Commission's Audit Manager
- the views of three Heads of Service (different to those involved previously) whose services were reviewed on a year by year basis by Internal Audit
- a review of the internal Audit Strategy and specifically actions resulting from it.

The Committee was provided with an appendix that informed it of the code of practice checklist with appropriate evidence relating to current compliance.

It was noted that there were issues surrounding appropriate benchmarking.

Members were informed that the conclusion of the Officers undertaking this review was that the evidence and views received demonstrated that the Internal Audit Service had satisfactory and appropriate arrangements and procedures in place in order to fulfil its duties and responsibilities. Improvements had also been made to the way the Service operated during 2008/09.

RESOLVED that

1. the report be noted.
2. the Internal Audit Strategy Document and related Progress Reports be reported to and considered by the Corporate Governance Group and thereafter the Audit Committee on an annual basis.
3. the work to provide benchmarked evidence be continued and included in subsequent reviews and Annual Reports.

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24/09 **Local Assessment - Case Studies**

Members were asked to consider a case study. The Committee considered and discussed a summary of an investigation report and provided their views on what decisions they would make.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

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25/09 **Local Assessment Framework**

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

1. Local Assessment Criteria - Revised Version (for approval)
2. Media Protocol - Revised Version (for approval)

3. Annual Report to the Standards Board for England - Final Version
4. Tees Valley Town and Parish Councils - Ethical Governance Workshop - 8 May 2009 - Training Materials and Feedback
5. Tees Valley Standards Committee Development Programme 2008/09
6. The Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Regulations 2009.

Members discussed issues surrounding officers, from other Tees Valley Authorities, undertaking investigations within Stockton, and vice versa. It was noted that a protocol already existed that would allow this to happen in appropriate cases. The Monitoring Officer would raise the issue at the District Lawyers Group and Members were advised that it could also be raised as an issue at the next event of the Tees Valley Standards Committee Development Programme.

RESOLVED that the information be agreed/noted as appropriate.

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26/09

Information/Discussion Items

Members of the Committee considered the following items:-

1. KLOE 2.3 Draft Response
2. Standards Board - Standards Update - February 2009
3. Standards one year on and 8 May 2008 to 30 March 2009 complaints statistics
4. Drawing up high standards - LGC Article
5. Standards Board - Press Release - Planning Ahead

It was noted that the Monitoring Officer would provide the Committee with any feedback received from the Audit Commission in relation to the KLOE response.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

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27/09

Standards Committee Forward Plan 2008/2010

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

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