

Standards Committee

A meeting of Standards Committee was held on Thursday, 30th July, 2009.

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

Officers: Mr I. Jones(RES), Mr D.E Bond, Mr A. Squires, Miss K. Wannop(LD)

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Mrs F. Robinson(Independent)

S **Declarations of Interest**

36/09

There were no declarations of interest.

S **Minutes of the Meetings held on 9th April 2009 and 7th May 2009**

37/09

Minutes of the meetings held on 9th April 2009 and 7th May 2009 were signed by the chair as a correct record.

S **Internal Audit - Escalation of Non-Implemented Internal Audit**

38/09 **Recommendations Report**

Members considered a report that informed them that the 2009 review of the Internal Audit service by the Council's external auditors raised the following issue:

There had been developments in recent years to strengthen the approach to ensuring that Internal Audit recommendations had been implemented. There was no formal escalation process in place to report to the Audit Committee where agreed actions had not been actioned.

Consequently procedures had been devised to rectify the situation. It was intended that the process of checking would start from 1st October, 2009, and would therefore start with a sample of audits issued from April to June, 2009, inclusive.

It also meant that with immediate effect all audit recommendations had to have an agreed 'implementation by' date inserted.

There were two different systems described; one for standard recommendations except schools and one for schools.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

S **Observing Council Meetings**

39/09

The Committee considered a report that provided feedback on Members' attendance at a recent Cabinet meeting, together with details of future Council meetings which Members would be able to attend.

Members were asked to inform the Director of Law and Democracy of the dates that they would be available to observe the specified Committee meetings.

RESOLVED that

1. the information be noted

2. Members contact the Director of Law and Democracy with their availability to observe the specified meetings.

S
40/09 **Comments, Complaints and Commendations - Fourth Quarter - 2008/09**

Members considered a report that provided details of complaints and commendations for the period January - March 2009.

The Committee were informed that the Authority had received 234 complaints which compared to 220 for the same period last year and 359 commendations which compared to 348 for the same period last year.

Members were provided with a breakdown of the three months figures by service area.

The key messages from the information supplied were provided to members.

RESOLVED that the information be received.

S
41/09 **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 have made.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

S
42/09 **Local Assessment Framework**

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

1. Misconduct allegations - summary details – the information was noted

2. Standards Board - Joint Standards Committee Guidance – the guidance was noted

3. Consideration Sub-Committee - Terms of Reference (Revised) – the revised terms of reference were agreed.

4. Advice Note: Official Capacity – the advice was noted.

RESOLVED that the information be agreed/noted, as indicated.

S
43/09 **Information/Discussion Items**

Members of the Committee considered the following items:-

1. Standards Board Bulletin 44
2. Standards Board - Dispensations Guidance
3. Standards Board Press Release - Standards and Ethics 2010
4. Standards & Ethics Good Practice – it was agreed that the pen pictures of Standards Committee members on the intranet would be made available on the website , if this had not already occurred . Also, pen pictures of substitute representatives/members would be provided.
5. Standards Board Release - New Director Regulation
6. Local Government Ombudsman - Annual Review 2008/09 – the final figures for Stockton were noted.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

S
44/09

Forward Plan

Consideration was given to the updated version of the Standards Committee Forward Plan. It was noted that it might be necessary to cancel/postpone the 28 August and the 24 September, 2009 meetings.

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

S
45/09

Members' and Officers' Gifts and Hospitality

Members considered a report that provided details of action taken in response to comments made at the last Committee meeting on 2 July.

The Committee was reminded that the first quarter report regarding Members and Officers gifts and hospitality was presented to the last meeting of the Committee. During consideration of the details relating to Officers, comments were made about the nature of the hospitality which it was considered it might be appropriate to accept and in what circumstances it might potentially be inappropriate to do so. It was agreed that these comments would be brought to the attention of relevant Officers. The issues raised had been discussed with the Corporate Management Team and guidance had also been issued to senior Officers, for wider dissemination across the organisation. A copy of that guidance was provided.

RESOLVED that the information be received.