
MEETING	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
DATE	17 NOVEMBER 2006
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS BAINTON (INDEPENDENT MEMBER, IN THE CHAIR), SCOTT, LEAMAN (INDEPENDENT MEMBER) AND CRAWFORD (PARISH COUNCIL MEMBER)
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLORS I WAUDBY AND D'AGORNE

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they had in the business on the agenda. No interests were declared.

47. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2006 be approved and signed as a correct record.

48. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's public participation scheme.

49. REVIEW OF WORKPLAN

Members reviewed the workplan for the Standards Committee for the 2006/07 municipal year. It was agreed that the item on Confidentiality & Transparency would be considered at the meeting scheduled for 26 January 2007, and Members were informed that the item on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment would not be available for consideration before late 2007. The workplan shown at Annex 1 was amended to reflect those changes.

50. UPDATE ON THE REVIEW OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Members considered a report which detailed the progress made to date in the review of the Council's Complaints Procedure.

The report highlighted the formation of a Complaints Procedure project team which included representatives from the service delivery Directorates and the corporate centre, together with the independent member of the standards committee. They had identified a number of issues for consideration which included:

- What was a complaint and what information would be available to staff to assist in the identification of a complaint
- how would a complaint be recorded and who would it be passed to
- If deemed necessary, how would an investigation be undertaken and who would decide on the necessary action
- What were the timescales for resolution and who should be informed of the outcome of an investigation
- How would we know if the customer was satisfied and what advice would they receive if they were not
- How would information on the lessons learnt be captured and how would we ensure that agreed changes to practice actually took place - How would that be monitored?

Meeting dates had been set to consider specific briefs to ensure the review was completed promptly and these were set out in the report. It was agreed that the consultation process was an essential part of the review so it would be necessary to continue using the existing procedure until the outcome of the review was known.

Members agreed that the three stages of the complaint procedure were necessary and that a timescale should be set and adhered to for dealing with each stage.

RESOLVED: Members noted the progress of the review and the dates set for future meetings of the project team.

51. THE FIFTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEES CONFERENCE HELD ON 16 & 17 OCTOBER 2006

Members considered a report from the Head of Civic, Democratic & Legal Services following her attendance at the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees on 16 and 17 October 2006.

The report detailed the lectures and workshops attended by the Head of Civic, Democratic & Legal Services which included:

- A keynote speech by Local Government Minister, Phil Woolas MP, setting out his proposals for the future of the ethical framework which was to include the circulation of a revised draft Code of Conduct in November 2006 for consultation. It was noted that to date this had not been received even though implementation was expected at the start of the new municipal year.
- A keynote speech by Patricia Hughes, Deputy Chair of the Standards Board for England, regarding the revised Code of Conduct. Plus, an overview of the Standards Board's plans for transforming itself into a

strategic regulator. A copy of the speech was provided at Annex 1 of the report.

- A presentation on the components of an effective ethical environment. They included the importance of establishing an ethical culture within an organisation and the two roles of a Standards Committee – enforcement of rules and a pre-emptive role of guidance requiring a more proactive approach to the ethical framework . The presentation also detailed the Audit Commission’s perspective on the corporate governance of an organisation.
- A presentation giving feedback from a questionnaire completed by Standards Committee Members for research carried on behalf of the Standards Board for England. The key findings were detailed in Annex 2 of the report.
- A discussion on whether good ethical governance would lead to better public trust in local politics and greater democratic engagement. It was suggested that the use of informal action by Monitoring Officers when dealing with minor issues, would improve behaviour, and it was agreed that organisations should be proactive in advising Officers and Members.
- A workshop which looked at the proposed amendments to the Code of Conduct and the key issues for Monitoring Officers. Members expressed concern about the issue of ‘National Consistency’ as it would be difficult to ensure it was achieved.

RESOLVED: Members noted the issues being discussed at a national level as detailed in the report.

CHRISTINE BAINTON
Independent Member, In The Chair

The meeting started at 3.30 pm and finished at 4.40 pm.

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2006/07 Workplan for Standards Committee

Ongoing Activities

Cases referred for investigation or determination
 Database of Standards Committee topics
 Standards Board Guidance
 Parish Council Issues
 Member and Officer Training

Programme of New Work

<u>Programme of New Work</u>	<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Communication / Strategic Activity</u>
Confidentiality and Transparency – Conclusions of the Executive on the report of the Scrutiny Panel	26 January 2007	
Amendments to the Members' Code of Conduct	26 January 2007	
Advice to Elected Members re activities during the purdah period	26 January 2007	
Ethical Governance Audit	26 January 2007	
Presentation on new Committee Management System	23 March 2007	
Annual Report	23 March 2007	
Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life	19 May 07	
Parish Councils – Good Practice at Meetings	May 2007	
Review of the Complaints Procedure	TBA	
Employee Code of Conduct – Member/Officer training.	2006/07	

Programme of New Work

Meeting Date

Communication / Strategic Activity

Full Ethical Audit

2006/07

Yes

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) – contribution of Standards Committee

TBA (Late 2007)