

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a MEETING held at COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE on THURSDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER 2003.

PRESENT: Mr RL Tickell (Chairman), Mr P McGuigan, Mrs P Rugg and Mr GA Thompson.

66. **Membership** The Director of Corporate Services reported the membership of the Committee.

67. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr PCB Coleman and Mr A Gooch.

68. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Resolved: To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2003.

69. **Corporate Complaints Procedure – Progress Report**

The Committee received a report by the Monitoring Officer which updated members on developments made in the Corporate Complaints procedure since February 2003. The Audit Commission had undertaken a review of the complaints procedure and a copy of their report was circulated. The Committee felt that it would be useful to continue to monitor the complaints procedure and noted that changes made as a result of the audit report should lead to improvements in the service and customer perception of the County Council.

Resolved:

- (1) To approve recommendations 1-8 and 10-13 of the Audit Commission Report and to note the understanding reached with the Audit Commission in respect of recommendation 9.*
- (2) To receive a further report on progress towards these recommendations in May 2004.*

70. **Internal Audit Section Annual Report 2002-2003**

The Committee received a report by the Chief Auditor regarding the work undertaken by his section in 2002-2003. Members were particularly encouraged to see that the overall conclusion arising from the planned audits across all departments, was that internal financial controls were in place and operating satisfactorily in the main. In

response to a query regarding risk management it was confirmed that officers were required to identify any potential risks within their service plans.

Resolved: To note the Internal Audit Section Annual Report for 2002-2003.

71. Ethical Governance – Progress Report

The Committee received a report by the Monitoring Officer which updated members on progress against issues identified by the Audit Commission as areas for consideration by the Council and outlined the future programme of work. The Chief Auditor updated members on the current position with regard to the outstanding items highlighted in the Wiltshire County Council response. It was anticipated that the outstanding items would be addressed by the end of the year.

Resolved: To note the report and to request an update on the ethical governance work programme for the January meeting.

72. Statement of Accounts 2002-03

The Committee received the Statement of Accounts for 2002-2003. The Assistant County Treasurer highlighted the main points in the accounts and responded to questions by members. It was noted that the deadlines for final accounts in future years would be brought forward which would have a knock on effect for future meeting dates of the Standards Committee.

Resolved:

- (1) To approve the draft Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2003.*
- (2) To agree that the Chairman of the Standards Committee should sign the draft accounts for 2002-2003.*
- (3) To note that the accounts are subject to audit and ratification at County Council on 11 November 2003.*

73. Wiltshire County Council Substitution Scheme

The Chairman informed the Committee that further information relating to this matter had been received and that he felt it would be helpful for members to take time to fully consider this by deferring this item.

Resolved: To defer consideration of this item until the next meeting.

74. Annual Report

The Committee considered the layout and content of the Standards Committee Annual Report. It was felt that some details regarding the future work programme should be included.

Resolved: To issue a draft copy of the annual report with the next Agenda to enable members to make any final amendments.

75. Consultation Paper on Indemnities for Members and Officers

The Monitoring Officer reported that he had recently met with monitoring officer colleagues in Wiltshire who agreed that the proposals set out in the consultation paper from the ODPM should be endorsed. It was suggested that the provisions of any indemnity should include co-opted members.

Resolved: To inform the ODPM that the Committee endorses the proposals set out in the recent consultation paper.

76. Dates of Future Meetings

To note that future meetings of the Committee will take place on:

9 October – 3pm
6 November – 3pm
4 December - 3pm.

77. Exclusion of the Public

Resolved: To agree that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in Minute No. 78 because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act.

78. Corporate Complaint – Subject Access Request under Data Protection Act 1998

The Committee received a report on progress made with regard to the subject access request under the Data Protection Act 1998 including the outcome of the independent review.

The monitoring officer confirmed that the Council had now satisfied its obligations in respect of the request and that the Information Commissioner regarded the matter as closed, subject to any further points being raised by the complainant.

Resolved: To note the current position.

(Duration of meeting: 3.00pm – 5.00pm)

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