

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a MEETING of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held at COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE on THURSDAY 7 OCTOBER 2004.

PRESENT:

Mr R Tickell (Chairman), Mr PCB Coleman, Mr A Gooch, Mr P McGuigan, Ms C O'Sullivan and Mrs P Rugg.

37. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Resolved: *To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2004.*

38. **Chairman's Announcements**

Independent Members' Forum

The Chairman informed the Committee that a meeting of the Independent Members' Forum (Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire Standards Committees) would take place on Friday 15 October 2004 in Swindon. It was agreed that Mr McGuigan and Mr Gooch would attend.

CIPFA Conference

The Chairman reported that a CIPFA Conference relating to Standards issues would be held at County Hall, Trowbridge on 15 November 2004. It was agreed that Mr Tickell, Mrs Rugg and Ms O'Sullivan would attend this Conference. Any other members subsequently wishing to attend should inform Nina Wilton so that a place could be booked for them.

39. **Corporate Complaints Procedure – Staff Training**

The Committee considered a report by the Solicitor to the County Council and a recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved: *To note the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's interest in this matter and to agree to monitor the effect of investment in the staff training in dealing with difficult situations.*

40. **Standards Board for England Third Annual Conference**

The Committee considered a report by the Corporate Standards Manager. The report outlined the main issues which were raised and discussed at the

Annual Conference. It was noted that only 66% of Standards Committees were chaired by an independent member and that consideration was to be given as to whether it should be a statutory requirement for the chair to be independent.

Resolved: To note the report

41. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Consultation: Draft Code of Conduct for Officers and Politically Restricted Appointments

The Committee considered two consultation documents which had been circulated to members for comment. Officers explained that if the draft code of conduct was ultimately adopted it was likely to supplement rather than replace the existing more detailed Wiltshire County Council Officers' Code of Conduct. With regard to politically restricted appointments members noted that the current requirements for Local Government Officers differed from those for Civil Servants and Health Service employees.

Officers explained that UNISON and the Chief Personnel Officer had also received a copy of the consultation papers for comment. Members felt that the County Council should respond formally to the document but that the issues needed to be discussed on a wider scale. The Committee did not feel that it was able to make an informed response to the papers in isolation.

Resolved: To ask the Corporate Standards Officer and Chief Personnel Officer to discuss the best way to respond to the two Consultation Papers from the ODPM with a view to taking the papers to the Staffing Policy Committee for its consideration.

42. Internal Audit Annual Report 2003-04

The Committee considered the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2003/04. The Chief Auditor outlined the main actions taken by the Internal Audit section for the year 2003/04. A summary of audit findings was also outlined in the appendix. It was noted that the remit of the audit section was extremely wide which meant that the Audit Team had to focus on the main areas of risk.

The Committee noted that two Departments' internal control environments were considered to be "satisfactory" and three were considered to be "good". Members stated that next year they would like all Departments to receive a minimum rating of "good".

Resolved:

- (1) To note that three Departments had "good" internal control environments but that two Departments had "satisfactory" internal control environments.*
- (2) To ask the Chief Auditor to bring an action plan to a future meeting setting out a schedule of concerns for the two "satisfactory" Departments, proposals to remedy these concerns and a timetable for action.*
- (3) To draw the attention of Cabinet Members to the annual report and to advise them that the Standards Committee believes that the target for*

next year should be for all Departments to receive at least a “good” rating for their internal control environments.

43. Implementation of Risk Management Procedures

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Auditor. The report informed members of the progress to date in implementing the County Council’s Risk Management Strategy and further action planned.

It was noted that the County Council had made good progress on risk management but that there was still work to be done. The Corporate Management Board was now receiving reports on strategic risks and a Corporate Risk Management Group met regularly to discuss these issues.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the progress and planned developments regarding risk management.*
- (2) To keep risk management procedures under regular review and to receive reports at future meetings to ensure that progress is continuing and that risks are being addressed.*

44. Ethical Governance Indicators

The Committee considered a report by the Monitoring Officer which outlined progress on the Council’s Code of Corporate Governance. Members welcomed the draft code.

The Committee stated that it was also important for contractors undertaking work on behalf of the County Council to adhere to the Code of Corporate Governance set out in the report.

Resolved:

- (1) To recommend the County Council to adopt the Code of Corporate Governance set out in the report subject to the following amendments:*
 - (i) In the paragraph relating to the Equality and Diversity Strategy – second bullet point – after the word “racist” insert “and homophobic”.*
 - (ii) In the paragraph relating to the Whistle-Blowing Procedure – first bullet point - after the word “record” insert “and investigate”.*
- (2) To ask the Corporate Standards Manager to bring an implementation plan to the next meeting of the Standards Committee.*

45. Statement of Internal Control in Local Government

The Committee considered a report by the Deputy Monitoring Officer which set out the Council’s draft Statement of Internal Control prepared in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003.

Resolved: To note the new requirements and the content of the proposed Statement of Internal Control for 2003/04.

46. **Annual Report**

Members discussed the content of the Standards Committee Annual report which would be published in December. A photographer would attend the next meeting and all members were requested to attend if possible. The Chairman asked the two elected members if they could prepare an item of their own choosing for the report.

Resolved: To consider a draft of the Annual Report at the next meeting on 2 December 2004.

(Duration of meeting: 3.00pm – 4.55pm)

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