



## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a MEETING of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held at COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE on THURSDAY 2 DECEMBER 2004.

### PRESENT:

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

#### 47. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr PCB Coleman.

#### 48. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Resolved: To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2004.

#### 49. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

##### ODPM Consultation Papers

The Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) consultation papers regarding the draft Code of Conduct for Officers and Politically Restricted Appointments had now been considered by the Staffing Policy Committee. Members of Staff had also been sent copies of the consultation papers by e-mail giving them an opportunity to respond if they wished to do so. A formal response from the County Council had been sent to the ODPM.

##### Internal Audit Reports

Members noted that a further report from the District Auditor would be submitted to the January meeting of the Committee.

#### 50. **Chairman's Announcements**

##### Dates of Future Meetings

The Chairman reported that it was necessary to hold an additional meeting and to change the February meeting date.

Resolved:

- (1) *To change the date of the next meeting from 3 February to 27 January 2005.*
- (2) *To hold an additional meeting on 3 March 2005.*

*Both of the above meetings will commence at 3pm.*

51. **Independent Members' Forum – Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire Standards Committees - 15 October 2004**

The Committee received a report on the above Forum submitted by the Vice-Chairman. It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be held at Wiltshire County Council and that the suggested date of 22 April was still provisional at this stage. Members agreed that it would be preferable to hold the meeting at the end of May next year to enable the Chairman to attend.

Resolved: *To ask the Corporate Standards Manager to arrange a speaker for the next meeting of the Independent Members' Forum and to confirm a date as soon as possible.*

52. **CIPFA Better Governance Conference Ethical Standards – 15 November 2004**

Ms O'Sullivan reported on the above Forum which both she and Mr Gooch had attended along with several officers of the authority. A full report of the Conference would be circulated to members in due course.

53. **Ethical Governance Framework**

The Committee discussed its priorities for inclusion in the ethical governance implementation plan. It was noted that work was already being undertaken on the authority's openness and provision of good access to information, the whistle-blowing procedure and staff welfare policies. The Committee felt that the Code of Ethical Governance was a very useful and well presented document.

Resolved:

- (1) *To agree that the four main priorities from the Code of Ethical Governance should be:*
  - ◆ *The Members' Code of Conduct*
  - ◆ *The Equality and Diversity Strategy*
  - ◆ *The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy*
  - ◆ *Procedures for declaring interests, claiming expenses and offers/receipt of gifts and hospitality*
- (2) *To receive reports on the above priorities at the January and March meetings of the Committee.*

**54. Annual Report**

The Committee discussed the content and format of its Annual Report for 2004. It was noted that the report would now be distributed in January and would include some information regarding the outcome of the County Council's Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA). This was the first time that the assessment had included ethical governance issues and the assessment team had interviewed the Chairman of the Committee.

*Resolved: To circulate a copy of the final draft of the Annual Report to members for comment and to distribute the report in January.*

**55. 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 Numbers 56 and 57 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 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act.*

**56. Local Settlement of Ombudsman Complaint**

The Committee considered a report by the Monitoring Officer which outlined the action taken by the Council to achieve a local settlement in a complaint made to the Ombudsman. Officers explained that the statutory Review Panels set up to hear Social Services complaints consisted of two County Councillors and one independent member with some experience of social services issues who chaired the hearing.

*Resolved: To note the report.*

**57. Local Settlement of Ombudsman Complaint**

The Committee considered a report by the Monitoring Officer which outlined the action taken by the Council to achieve a local settlement in a complaint made to the Ombudsman. Officers explained that the Appeal Panels set up to hear school admission appeals consisted of at least one lay member with no experience in education matters and at least one member with experience in education such as a retired headteacher.

*Resolved: To note the report.*

(Duration of meeting: 3.00pm – 4.30pm)

The Officer who has produced these notes is Marie Todd, of Democratic & Members' Services, direct line (01225) 713011, e-mail [marietodd@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:marietodd@wiltshire.gov.uk)  
Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115.