



## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a MEETING of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held at COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE on THURSDAY 27 JANUARY 2005.

### PRESENT:

Mr R Tickell (Chairman), Mr PCB Coleman and Ms C O'Sullivan.

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1. **Apologies** Apologies for absence were received from and Mr A Gooch, Mr P McGuigan and Mrs P Rugg.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

*Resolved: To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2004.*

3. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

Local Settlement of Ombudsman Complaint (Min. No. 57) Mr PCB Coleman referred to this complaint and asked what action was being taken to comply with the Ombudsman's advice. The Clerk reported that the Democratic & Members' Services Unit, which provided clerks for Schools Admission Panels, had considered this case and had reviewed the guidance from the Ombudsman, in order to reduce the likelihood of similar complaints being made in future. A template had been prepared which set out a structured format for School Admission Panels to adopt in reaching decisions.

4. **Chairman's Announcements** The Chairman made the following announcements:-

- (1) Chairman's Resignation The Chairman reminded the Committee that he would resigning at the end of the April meeting after over four years' involvement with Standards for the Council since October 2000.
- (2) Appointment of New Member An advertisement, similar to that used the previous year, was being placed in local papers covering Wiltshire the following week, the closing date for receipt of applications being Friday 25 February 2005. The Interview Panel would consist of Mr P McGuigan, Mr J Sang from the Race Equality Council and a County Councillor with Mr S Gerrard, Monitoring Officer being in attendance to offer advice. It was anticipated that interviews would be held in March and that the appointment would be confirmed by County Council at its meeting on 17 May 2005.

- (3) Annual Report Copies of the Annual Report were available for circulation and the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Mrs M Todd, Clerk and Ms C Slater, Graphic Design Artist for their work in producing such an excellent document.
  - (4) Standards Board Roadshow It was noted that this Roadshow was due to be held in Bristol on 14 June 2005. The event was intended to provide an opportunity to share news, views and feedback on investigations and determinations under the Code of Conduct and the promotion of the ethical agenda, details of which would be circulated to all members of this Committee. It was decided that three places should be booked for two members of this Committee and one officer, the names to be agreed at the meeting of this Committee due to be held on 9 June 2005 after the May County Council Elections.
  - (5) Local Training Event on Local Investigations and Determination of Complaints It was proposed to hold a half day training event for members of Standards Committees in Wiltshire on 8 March 2005 in Devizes, with the provision of lunch. The speaker was likely to be Mr Nicholas Holden, Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of the West of England and a member of the Adjudication Panel.
  - (6) Institute of Public Finance Better Governance Team A cumulative summary of decisions by Case Tribunals formed from the Adjudication Panel was circulated for information.
  - (7) Date of Next Meeting It had been necessary to change the date of the next meeting in March to enable the Chief Executive and the District Auditor to attend. The meeting would now take place on Friday 11 March 2005 starting at 2.30pm.
5. **Whistle Blowing Procedure** Consideration was given to a report by the Monitoring Officer which proposed some changes to the existing procedure.

Resolved: To agree that:-

- (1) *the whistle blowing procedure be amended so that whistle blowers take their concerns to either the Monitoring Officer, the Corporate Standards Manager or the Chief Executive.*
- (2) *the Monitoring Officer should determine the most appropriate method of investigation of allegations on a case by case basis and the Corporate Standards Manager should conduct most investigations, unless the circumstances of a case make it inappropriate.*
- (3) *In cases where it is inappropriate for an investigation to be conducted internally, the Council will build upon the good existing reciprocal arrangements it has with neighbouring authorities, so that external officers with appropriate experience will be assigned as investigating officers.*
- (4) *no investigations should be conducted by anyone who works for the department involved in an allegation.*

- (5) *a central database, held by the Corporate Standards Manager, be established to log all whistle-blowing allegations, tracking the investigation and outcomes in each case.*
- (6) *outcomes be monitored for all whistleblowers to ensure that they do not suffer any adverse consequences of raising an issue in good faith. Outcomes to be recorded on the central whistle blowing database.*
- (7) *Standards Committee should receive an annual report on the efficacy of the procedure after it has been implemented.*

6. **Internal Audit 2004-05 Progress Report** The Committee considered a report by the Chief Auditor which:-

- presented members with an overview of the overall position reached in delivering the agreed Internal Audit Plan for 2004-05, and
- provided the further information requested by the Committee at its meeting in October 2004, in respect of the two departments whose internal control environments were rated as 'satisfactory' for 2003-04.

Resolved:

- (1) *To note the contents of the report and the progress made to date.*
- (2) *To note that progress on the remaining outstanding matters would be reported back to this Committee as part of the next Annual Report.*

7. **Members' Induction Programme** Consideration was given to the arrangements for training on the Members' Code of Conduct.

Resolved:

- (1) *To reaffirm the Committee's previous decision that training on the Members' Code of Conduct was mandatory for all elected and co-opted members of the Council and also independent members of this Committee.*
- (2) *To request the Monitoring Officer and the Corporate Standards Manager to prepare the training programme.*

8. **Independent Members' Forum – Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire**  
On report by the Corporate Standards Manager,

Resolved: *To note that arrangements had been made for a meeting of the South West Independent Members' Forum to be held at County Hall, Trowbridge on 22 April 2005 between 11.00am and 1.00pm, with Mr Paul Hoey, Head of Policy & Research at the Standards Board for England as guest speaker.*

(Duration of meeting: 3.00pm – 4.30pm)

The Officer who has produced these notes is Roger Bishton, of Democratic & Members' Services, direct line (01225) 713035, e-mail [rogerbishton@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:rogerbishton@wiltshire.gov.uk)  
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