

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

15th June 2010

PRESENT:-

District Council Members

Councillors Atkin and Harrison (Conservative Group) and Councillor Mrs. Mead (Labour Group).

Independent Members

Mr. P. Dawn, Mr. R. Pearson, Mr. P.B. Purnell, Mrs. K. St. Clair and Mr. D.R. Williams.

SC/1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED:-

That Mr. D.R. Williams be appointed Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

SC/2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Mr. K. Fairbrother (Castle Gresley Parish Council) and Mr. K. Overton (Willington Parish Council).

SC/3. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED:-

That Mr. P. Dawn be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

SC/4. **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER**

The Chairman welcomed District Councillor Atkin to the deliberations of the Committee.

SC/5. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th April 2010 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

SC/6. **WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11**

The Committee considered a proposed work programme for 2010/11. At the last Meeting, the Committee considered various responses for the Committee's Annual Return to Standards for England. These included

negative responses on the following issues and it was noted that both were now included in the proposed work programme:-

- The public accessing information about how to make a complaint against a Member through a complaints leaflet available from the authority.
- A mechanism in place for measuring the satisfaction of all those involved in allegations of misconduct.

At the present time, the authority had a leaflet regarding general complaints about the authority but this did not contain the specific information on complaints against Members, which was covered extensively on the Council's website. However, the leaflet was reviewed periodically and it was suggested that at the next review, a reference could be included on the procedure for complaints against Members.

A proposed questionnaire concerning satisfaction with complaint handling was also considered and it was suggested that this should be forwarded to the complainant and the subject Member following the decision of a Sub-Committee (Consideration) on an Investigator's report. Members suggested several amendments to the questionnaire and it was noted that a Meeting of a Sub-Committee (Consideration) was unlikely before the next Meeting of the Committee on 28th September 2010.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That a reference be included on the procedure for complaints against Members upon the next review of the Council's general complaints leaflet.***
- (2) That a further report be considered at the next Meeting on the proposed questionnaire concerning satisfaction with complaint handling following the various suggestions made by Members.***

SC/7. **LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE – REVIEW OF SELF ASSESSMENT**

The Committee received a report which outlined the background and process which had led to the submission of a Review of Self Assessment document and Action Plan and which also invited the Committee to consider the document and report to Full Council on progress.

A revised Local Code of Corporate Governance was adopted by the Council on 3rd July 2008, at which time it was reported that a Self Assessment audit had been carried out by Officers to provide evidence of how the Council had fulfilled or intended to fulfil its commitment to corporate governance. In approving the Code, Full Council had agreed that the Standards Committee should receive half-yearly reports on progress in relation to compliance with the six core principles on which the Code was based. This would ensure that this Committee had a pivotal role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct throughout the authority.

On 17th May 2010, Officers had again met to review the assessment undertaken on 9th November 2009 and a report showing the progress that had been made in the last six months, with a recalculation of the score where justified, was attached to the report. It had been agreed that an Action Plan, identifying those areas with a score of eight or below, would be created with a view to addressing those issues over the next twelve months. A copy of the Action Plan, indicating the progress made to date was attached to the report.

The Committee had previously suggested that it would be beneficial if the Chairman could be involved in the Self Assessment process. On 26th May 2010, the Chairman met with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to review the Council's baseline position in relation to Principle 3, to assess both the source documents and scoring.

Major items that had been achieved in the last six months included retaining a level 3 for 'Use of Resources' and 3 for 'Managing Performance', giving the Council an overall 3 out of 4 for its organisational assessment. This indicated that the Council was 'performing well' across all the services being provided to the community.

It was noted that the Chairman of the Committee would be meeting the Chief Executive shortly on an informal basis to discuss the work of the Committee.

RESOLVED:-

That the Council be recommended to note progress in achieving the actual points set out in the Self Assessment of performance under the Local Code of Corporate Governance.

SC/8. **NINTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 18TH & 19TH OCTOBER 2010**

The Committee considered a report on a nomination for a Member of the Committee to attend this Annual Assembly. However, a letter had been received from the Chief Executive of Standards for England on 14th June 2010 advising that the Annual Assembly had now been cancelled. This was in response to the announcement from the Government that there would be provisions in its proposed Decentralisation and Localism Bill 'to abolish the Standards Board regime'. The draft bill was not expected to be published until the autumn, when further details on the implications for local government and any local standards framework would be available.

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

SC/9. **SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS TO STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEES**

It was noted that there were no outstanding cases to report since the last Meeting.

SC/10. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985)**

RESOLVED:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

MINUTES

The Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th April 2010 were duly received.

D.R. WILLIAMS

CHAIRMAN