

M I N U T E S

meeting: **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

date: **11 JUNE 2009**

PRESENT:-

Mr W A Parker (Chair)
Councillor Duhra (Mayor), Councillor Gwinnett (Deputy Mayor),
Councillor Pugh and Councillor Wynne
Mr K R Aithal, Mr A W Lee and Mr R C Tyler-Morris

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:-

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Miles, Mr J Harris and Professor G W Hurd

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:-

Customer and Shared Services

S Kembrey - Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer)
P Main - Chief Financial Officer (for agenda item 7)
F Davis - Group Manager (Advocacy Services)

Office of the Chief Executive

P Tedstone - Democratic Services Manger (for agenda item 7)
L Banbury - Democratic Support Officer

Wolverhampton
City Council



Election of Vice-Chair

- 1 Resolved:-
That Mr K R Aithal be elected as Vic-Chairman of the Standards Committee for the 2009/10 municipal year.

Declarations of Interest

- 2 No interests were declared.

Minutes

- 3 Resolved:-
(a) That, subject to the substitution of the word 'on' in place of 'or' in the final line of the fourth paragraph on page 3, the minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2009 be approved as a correct record.

(b) That the minutes of the joint meeting with the Audit Committee held on 27 April 2009 be approved as a correct record and adopted.

Local Assessment of Code of Conduct Complaints – Appointment of Assessment Sub-Committee (Appendix 1)

The Democratic Support Officer presented a report, which sought the appointment of the Chair and members of the Standards Committee (Assessment) Sub-Committee for the 2009/10 municipal year.

- 4 Resolved:-
That the following be appointed as members of the Standards Committee (Assessment) Sub-Committee for the 2009/10 municipal year:-

Mr K R Aithal (Chairman)
Mr A W Lee
Councillor Miles
Councillor Pugh

Members' Allowances 2009/10 (Appendix 2)

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report which sought an amendment to the 2009/10 Members' Allowances Scheme in order to pay Special Responsibility Allowances to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Petitions Committee, subject to a review in 6 months time. The Officer further advised that Mayoral Allowances were not currently included in the Members' Allowances Scheme and, for the purposes of transparency, it was suggested that provision should be made in a future scheme.

5

Resolved:-

That Council be recommended to amend the 2009/10 Members' Allowances Scheme in order to pay a Special Responsibility Allowance of £13,470 to the Chair of the Petitions Committee and £4,490 to the Vice-Chair, subject to review in 6 months time.

Protocol for Member/Officer Relationships (Appendix 3)

The Chief Legal Officer presented a report, which sought consideration of the methodology for the Standards Committee to review the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations as part of the Committee's Work Plan for 2009/10.

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Resolved:-

(a) That approval be given to the methodology to review the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations during 2009/10 and that arrangements be made to conduct such a review.

(b) That training be provided for Members and Officers as required.

(c) That a reminder be issued to all Members in regard to the provisions of the Code of Conduct.

Standards Board for England – Annual Return (Appendix 4)

The Chief Legal officer presented a report, which provided information on the Annual Return which had been submitted to the Standards Board for England, giving details of the ethical governance framework within the Council. The Committee were also requested to consider issues arising from the Annual Return which may need to be included in Work Plan for 2009/10 and referral of the Annual Return to Council to support wider governance arrangements and the ethical framework as recommended by the Standards Board for England.

Councillor Gwinnett questioned whether the Council should appoint an Executive Member with portfolio responsibility for Standards. The Chief Legal Officer indicated that she was not aware of any Councils who made such an appointment, adding that she had access to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) in order to report any relevant matters the Standards Committee as and when necessary.

Responding to Mr Lee's comment regarding the publication of the local authority Annual Reports by the Standards Board, the Group Manager (Advocacy Services) advised that no timescale had been given for publication and that the Standards Board utilised the returns to inform future guidance. The Chief Legal officer pointed out that the Standards Board for England, in its strategic role, had the power to intervene if it considered that a local authority did not have adequate arrangements in place to ensure and promote high ethical standards.

With regard to the section of the Return concerning meetings between the Chairman and the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive, Mr Parker drew attention to his longstanding and very good relationship with Members of the Council.

7 Resolved:-

(a) That the Annual Return for 2008/09, recently submitted to the Standards Board for England, be received and made available to all Members of the Council.

(b) That the Standards Committee Work Plan for 2009/10 include the issues outlined in paragraph 4.1 of the report in regard to future action.

Monitoring Officer's Report (Appendix 5)

The Group Manager (Advocacy Services) presented a report which provided an update on local assessment arrangements, publications, the Standards Board Annual Assembly and the Association of Independent Members of Standards Committee in England.

8 Resolved:-

(a) That the report be received.

(b) That the Chairman of the Standards Committee be authorised to accompany the Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) to the Standards Board Annual Assembly at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham on 12 and 13 October 2009, on behalf of the Standards Committee.

(c) That approval be given to the payment of subscriptions and joining fees (where appropriate) for the Independent Members of the Committee in respect of the Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees.

Chairman's Communications

9 The Chairman drew attention to recent research commissioned by the Standards Board for England and carried out by BMG. He added that he had been invited to attend a meeting the previous week in connection with the research at which the Code of Conduct was discussed in general terms. With regard to consideration of specific Code of Conduct cases by the Sub-Committees, there was a general consensus amongst the local authorities in attendance that there should be a method of filtering complaints by the Monitoring Officer before they reached this stage.

The Chairman advised Members that the next Committee meeting, scheduled for 30 July 2009, would be immediately followed by a training session.