

MINUTES

meeting: **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

date: **1 JULY 2010**

PRESENT:-

Mr W A Parker (Chair)

Councillors Gwinnett, Miles, Mrs Mills, T H Turner and Wynne

Mr K R Aithal, Mr J Harris, Mr G W Hurd, and

Mr R C Tyler-Morris (Independent Members)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:-

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Jones and Mr A W Lee

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:-

- F Davis - Group Manager, Advocacy Services (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Customer and Shared Services
- L Banbury - Democratic Support Officer, Office of the Chief Executive

Wolverhampton
City Council



Declarations of Interest

1 No interests were declared.

Election of Vice-Chair

2 Resolved:-
That Mr K R Aithal be elected as Vice-Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

Minutes

3 Resolved:-
That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2010 be approved as a correct record.

Annual Review of the Constitution

4 Pursuant to resolution 36, the Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that the May 2010 version of the Constitution was now available on the Council's Website. Extensive paper copies would not be produced in view of the planned fundamental review of the Constitution. A report on this issue was to be considered at the next schedule meeting of this Committee.

Planning Code of Conduct for Members and Officers and Review of the Public Speaking Procedure

5 Pursuant to resolution 37, the Democratic Support Officer advised that this report was to be considered by full Council on 28 July 2010.

Dates and Times of Meetings

6 It was noted that meetings of the Standards Committee would be held as follows during the ensuing municipal year:-

- 22 July 2010 (Joint meeting with Audit Committee followed by Standards Committee) *changed from schedule agreed at Annual Council due to clash with Bye Election*
- 7 October 2010 (Joint meeting with Audit Committee followed by Standards Committee)
- 13 January 2011 (Standards Committee)
- 3 March 2011 (Standards Committee)
- 21 April 2011 (Joint meeting with Audit Committee followed by Standards Committee)

Schedule of Outstanding Minutes (Appendix 1/16)

The Democratic Support Officer presented a report, which outlined a schedule of outstanding minutes together with an indication when it was expected that reports on individual items would be submitted for consideration.

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Resolved:-

That the report be received.

Standards for England – Annual Report (Appendix 1/17)

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented a report, which provided information on the Annual Return recently submitted to Standards for England in relation to the ethical governance framework within the Council.

Responding to Members' comments, the Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that the Monitoring Officer had very little discretion in regard to complaints against Members, with the presumption that all complaints were referred to the Assessment Sub-Committee as the initial filtering process. The Authority had, however, taken a commonsense approach to dealing with fairly trivial matters, which was within the spirit of the Standards for England regime and with their agreement. There were currently two Wolverhampton investigations, the first having been dealt with at national level and the Authority was now in receipt of the Standards for England's report; the second was being dealt with by the Monitoring Officer and would be concluded in the near future. Members stressed the need for Officers to measure the satisfaction levels of those involved in allegations of misconduct.

It was noted that the present Government intended to abolish Standards for England, which would require primary legislation; information on this issue was awaited.

Members noted that the Authority had a Whistle Blowing Policy, but questioned whether it was strongly promoted. They also expressed concern regarding the lack of a support mechanism for staff who have made disclosures.

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Resolved:-

(a) That the report be referred to full Council for information.

(b) That consideration be given to establishing an appropriate method for measuring the satisfaction of those involved in allegations of misconduct.

(c) That leading Members be consulted in regard to the Council's Whistle Blowing Policy and specifically the need for staff members who have followed this route to be adequately supported following their disclosures.

Monitoring Officer's Report (Appendix 1/18)

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented a report, which provided information on:-

- the future of Standards for England;
- local assessment;
- publications, and
- Standards for England Annual Assembly.

It was noted that the future of the Risk Based Approach and Social Networking, as detailed on pages 5 and 6 of the Bulletin, was now unclear given the situation of Standards for England.

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Resolved:-

That the report be received.