

# MINUTES

meeting: **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

date: **17 NOVEMBER 2011**

## **PRESENT:-**

Mr W Parker (Chair)  
Councillors O'Neill, T Singh and Wynne  
Mr R Aithal, Mr G W Hurd, Mr A W Lee and  
Mr R C Tyler-Morris (Independent Members)

## **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:-**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors  
Mrs Samuels and Turner

## **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:-**

### Delivery Directorate

S Kembrey	-	Assistant Director, Governance
L Banbury	-	Democratic Support Officer
F Davis	-	Group Manager (Advocacy Services)
R Morgan	-	Senior Audit Manager

**Wolverhampton**  
City Council



**Declarations of Interest**

- 32                   No interests were declared.

**Minutes**

- 33           Resolved:-  
              That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2011 be approved as a correct record.

**Schedule of Outstanding Minutes (Appendix 20)**

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

- 34           Resolved:-  
              That the report be received.

**Whistleblowing Policy (Appendix 21)**

The Senior Audit Manager presented a report detailing the Council's current Whistleblowing Policy, which was approved by the Audit Committee on 26 September 2011. The Policy was reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it remained up to date, fit for purpose and represented generally accepted good practice.

The Committee were advised that an annual report, summarising activity carried out under the Policy, was submitted to the Audit Committee. A question was raised regarding the amount of detail in the summary and what further action could be requested by the Audit Committee should they be dissatisfied with the outcome of an investigation. The Committee also stressed the need for the Audit Committee to be furnished with as much detail as possible in reports outlining the outcome of investigations, bearing in mind the need to observe the issue of confidentiality.

- 35           Resolved:-  
              (a) That the Whistleblowing Policy, endorsed by the Audit Committee on 26 September 2011, be noted.  
  
              (b) That consideration be given to an amendment to the Policy to include details of the process for reconsideration, should the Audit Committee be dissatisfied with the outcome of an investigation.

**Localism Bill/Training**

- 36           The Assistant Director advised the Committee that the Localism Bill had been given Royal Assent on 15 November 2011 and contained wide ranging legislation around the general power of competence. The Standards Board for England would be abolished and Council's would be given the option to delegate the functions to a Council Committee.

There would still be a requirement for at least one independent member to be represented. Council's would need to adopt a Code of Conduct and it would be possible to adopt the current Code for the initial period. Declarations of interest would revert back to pecuniary and non-pecuniary, rather than personal and prejudicial.

It was noted that the Group Manager (Advocacy Services) would be circulating a briefing note to all Members of the Council, including the independent members of this Committee, on details of the legislation. The note would include the anticipated timescale for commencement of the eight week transitional period during which the current Standards Committee regime would continue to operate.

The Assistant Director drew attention to seminars to be delivered by Trowers and Hamlins, on the provisions of the Localism legislation, on 5 December 2011 between 1700 and 1830 hours and on a further date to be agreed in January 2012. All Members of the Council and independent members of this Committee were invited to attend.

### **Allegations of Misconduct**

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Members had raised, at a previous meeting of the Committee, the need to establish an appropriate method for measuring satisfaction of those involved in allegations of misconduct. The Assistant Director had written to individual Members who had been through the system, but had only received one reply.

The response related largely to issues around vexatious and frivolous complaints. It was noted that the new legislation would be requesting Councils to implement a filtering process for complaints under the Code of Conduct. The Assistant Director advised that the issues raised in the letter could be addressed in the report on procedures and processes in regard to the changed Standards regime under the new legislation.