

## **Standards Committee – Meeting held on Wednesday, 10th October, 2007.**

### **Present:-**

#### **Co-opted Independent Members:-**

The Reverend Paul Lipscomb, Mr Fred Ashmore, Mr Mike Field and Dr Henna Khan

#### **Elected Members:-**

Councillors Aziz, Finn, L Khan, Mann and O'Connor

#### **Parish Councillor Representatives:-**

Britwell Parish Councillor Nicoline Brandligt and Wexham Court Parish Councillor Dalip Rajput (Deputy)

### **PART 1**

#### **10. Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **11. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **12. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned from 6.18 p.m. to 6.38 p.m. to allow those Members observing Ramadan to break their fast.

#### **13. Draft Annual Report 2006/2007**

As required by the Council's Constitution, the Director of Law and Corporate Governance submitted for consideration the draft Annual Report outlining the work undertaken by the Committee during 2006/2007. In addition to summarising the achievements of the Committee over the last municipal year, the Annual Report included an introduction from the Chair; an outline of the role of the Standards Board for England; the composition of the Committee; its current terms of reference and its proposed work programme for the next 12 months.

The Director of Law and Corporate Governance indicated that, as previously instructed by the Committee, the Annual Report would be published in a more "user friendly" format so that the work of the Committee would be more accessible to the Council's key partners, stakeholders and the public at large.

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During consideration of the draft Report minor amendments and corrections were agreed which the Officers undertook to incorporate prior to its submission to Council for approval.

**Recommended** – That the draft Annual Report of the Standards Committee for 2006/2007 as now amended be approved by the Council.

### **14. Members' Performance Monitoring**

In accordance with the instructions of the Council at its meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2006 a record of elected Members' attendance at Council, committees, sub-committees, panels and outside bodies meetings and Member training sessions during the municipal year 2006/2007 was submitted for consideration.

The Committee discussed this matter at length during which the following points were made:-

- (1) The data presented did not take into account the level and standard of Members' attention and/or their contribution at the meetings they attended.
- (2) Attendance at meetings only represented a part of the duties undertaken by Members e.g. representing their constituents and ward case work.
- (3) The call-on Members' time in terms of the number of meetings and training sessions they were required to attend was considerable and despite the best efforts of Officers "double bookings" did sometimes occur.
- (4) Members had a responsibility to the electorate they represented to fulfil all their duties/responsibilities to the best of their abilities and their Council duties should take precedent over other social and business commitments.
- (5) When standing for election Members should be aware of the commitment they were taking on.
- (6) In the majority of cases Members put themselves forward to sit on Committees/Panels/Outside Bodies and they should fulfil the commitment they have made by so doing.
- (7) Sometimes circumstances did occur outside the control of the Member which prevented them from fulfilling their obligations and for this reason it was recognised that to expect 100% attendance was unrealistic. However, concern was expressed that only 9 out of the 41 Members only achieved 90% and above attendance in respect of Council, Committee meetings etc. It was suggested that a more reasonable "yardstick" against which members performance could be measured was 80% attendance but during 2006/07 only 19 members achieved 80% or above attendance levels.
- (8) Of even greater concern was Members' record of attendance at compulsory training sessions. The Committee was informed that in respect of training sessions which Members had to attend as a

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condition of membership of a particular Committee/Sub-Committee such sessions sometimes had to be repeated twice. In view of the fact that for the majority of training sessions Members received notice well in advance, there was strong support for the proposal that training sessions should be repeated only once.

- (9) In respect of training it was suggested that e-learning and on-line assessment might be a possible long term alternative development method which might reduce the amount of time Members would have to spend at the Town Hall.

With a view to improving Members' attendance the issue of possible sanctions which could be imposed on Members with particularly poor attendance records was raised. It was suggested that the help and co-operation of the Group Leaders should be sought in this matter particularly in respect of Members' attendance at compulsory training sessions.

**Resolved** – That a meeting between the Chair of the Committee, Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Group Leaders be held as soon as practicable to discuss the issue of Members' attendance at meetings and identify ways in which Members' performance particularly in respect of attendance at compulsory training sessions can be improved.

### **15. Ethical Governance - Action Plan**

The Director of Law and Corporate Governance submitted an action plan setting out proposed tasks and processes necessary to implement the recommendations made by the Audit Commission in response to the findings of the ethical governance diagnostic survey carried out on behalf of the Council in September 2006.

**Resolved** – That the Ethical Governance Action Plan now submitted be approved and incorporated into the Committee's current work programme.

### **16. Work Programme 2007/2008**

The Officers submitted for consideration the Committee's current Work Programme.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the fact that the meeting between the Chair of the Committee, Group Leaders, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer to discuss the issues raised in response to the Ethical Governance Diagnostic Survey had still to be arranged. It was hoped that this would take place within the next couple of months with a view to the outcome of the meeting being reported to the Committee in January and the work programme had been amended accordingly.

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The Officers indicated that the Ethical Governance Action Plan approved by the Committee would be incorporated in to the work programme and the revised programme would be submitted to the Committee's next meeting.

**Resolved** – That the current Work Programme for 2007/2008 now submitted be noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.15 pm and closed at 7.30 pm)