

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
9th June, 2011

Present:- Mr. M. Andrew (in the Chair); Councillors Buckley, Gilding, Hughes and Middleton; Mrs. A. Bingham, Mr. I. Daines, Mr. P. Edler, Dr. G. Musson, Ms. J. Porter and Mr. N. Sykes and Councillors D. Bates, P. Blanksby and D. Rowley (Parish Councils' Representatives).

An apology for absence was received from Mr. D. Foster.

B1 MINUTES

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14th April, 2011 be approved as a correct record.

With regards to Minute No. B36 Councillor Jane Austen had now stood down and Councillor Darren Hughes was welcomed onto this Committee in her place.

With reference to Minute No. B39 (Future of the Standards Committee) it was noted that various comments had been received and these would be taken into account with regards to future arrangements once details of the Localism Bill became clearer.

B2 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2010/11

Consideration was given to a report presented by Rob Houghton, Governance and Risk Manager, which detailed the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2010/11.

The Annual Governance Statement outlined the Council's view of the application of good governance standards. The overall position was positive for the Council, with progress being made on the significant issues raised in last year's Statement. There were no additional items added following this year's review.

Proper practice required the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to sign the statement prior to its publication with the Statement of Accounts in September, 2011.

The Annual Governance Statement was to be considered and approved by the Cabinet before it was presented for signature by the Leader and Chief Executive.

The details of the Statement were considered and it was pointed out that a word change in paragraph 3.5 to now read "The Council may decide ..." would take account of any decision by the Council to adopt a voluntary code of conduct and a standards committee.

Resolved:- (1) That the contents of the 2010/11 draft Annual Governance Statement be noted.

(2) That the draft Statement, as presented to the Audit Committee on 1st June, 2011 for review, be noted and that, subject to any changes resulting from the Audit Committee meeting, the statement be presented to Cabinet for consideration and approval.

(3) That the requirement for the Leader and the Chief Executive to sign the statement after its agreement by Cabinet and prior to the publication of accounts in September, 2011 be noted.

B3 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2011

Consideration was given to the draft Standards Committee Annual Report 2011 presented by Tim Mumford, Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) which showed how the Committee had performed its functions over the last year and how it supported good governance and high standards within the borough.

Attention was drawn to the sections of the draft Annual report and in respect of Section 2 (Membership) anyone wishing to update or provide information on their pen picture should do so and forward the wording direct to the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services).

Section 5 set out details of the work of the Committee during 2010/11 and some suggested amendments to (c) Ethical Audit relating to Paragraphs 1 and 3 were circulated at the meeting. The Vice-Chairman, Mrs. Angela Bingham, was to be referred to in person as she had led on this piece of work.

With regards to Section 6 (Summary of Complaints) it was suggested that, following discussion, the Parish Councils whose Members had been the subject of allegations should be named in the report, but Paragraph 3 detailing who had made the allegations should not contain any further detail.

Section 8 (Issues for the Year Ahead) proposed other areas of work that the Committee could take forward and it was suggested that further involvement with the Town and Parish Councils was important in order to maintain the high standards of conduct.

Resolved:- That the comments made on the Draft Annual Report be incorporated into the content and an updated version be presented to the next meeting in July, 2011.

B4 PARISH COMPACT/QUESTIONNAIRE

Tim Mumford, Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services), referred to the Parish Compact and to the Questionnaire devised by the working group chaired by the Vice-Chairman, which had been circulated to all Town and Parish Councils earlier in the year.

The Compact facilitated closer working with the Standards Committee, but, due to the elections in May, some Parish Clerks requested that discussions be re-opened with Town and Parish Councils later in the year as to training requirements and further joint working with the Committee.

The Committee was mindful of the uncertainties around the Localism Bill and the difficulties being faced with getting Town and Parish Councils on board. However, it was suggested that the Chair of the Working Group draft up a letter and present this to the next meeting of the Committee with a view to this being circulated to all Town and Parish Councils informing them that reconsideration was being given to the Parish Compact.

Resolved:- That Angela Bingham be tasked with drafting a letter to the Town and Parish Councils and for this to be considered by the Committee at its next meeting.

(THE CHAIRMAN AUTHORISED CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN ORDER TO PROCESS THE MATTERS REFERRED TO.)

B5 STANDARDS COMMITTEE - MEETING IN AUGUST

The Chairman asked the Committee to consider whether or not they wished to have a meeting during the August recess.

The general consensus was that a meeting should not take place and that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, if necessary, should meet with the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services).

Resolved:- That there be no meeting of the Standards Committee during August, 2011.

B6 TIM MUMFORD, ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES)

The Chairman paid tribute to Mr. Tim Mumford who was attending his last Standards Committee meeting and who would be retiring at the end of June, 2011.

The Chairman on behalf of the Standards Committee offered Tim his best wishes for the future and a long and happy retirement.