

Standards Committee

Thursday, 16th October, 2008

PRESENT:

Independent Members

Mike Wilkinson (Chair) (Independent Member)
Rosemary Greaves (Independent Member)
Philip Turnpenny (Independent Member)

Councillors

D Blackburn J L Carter
C Campbell J Elliott

Parish Members

Councillor Mrs P Walker Pool in Wharfedale Parish Council

APOLOGIES:

Councillors E Nash and Priestley

21 Appeals against refusal of inspection of documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents in accordance with Procedure Rule 25 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules.

22 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no resolutions to exclude the public.

23 Late items

There were no late items submitted to the agenda by the Chair for consideration.

24 Declaration of interests

There were no declarations of personal/prejudicial interests for the purpose of section 81(3) of the Local Government Act 2000 and paragraphs 8 to 12 of the Members' Code of Conduct.

25 Minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the Standards Committee meetings held on 1st July 2008 and 14th July 2008 were approved as a correct record.

26 Minutes of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

The minutes of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meetings held on 18th June 2008 and 30th June 2008 were received and noted.

27 Parish and Town Council Training

The Member Development Officer presented a report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development updating the Committee on progress with the project to review learning and development provision for Parish and Town Councillors.

In discussing the report, Members raised the following points:

- (a) the officers involved were thanked for their work and the level of research undertaken;
- (b) the inclusion of Town and Parish Councillors in City Councillors' training sessions was welcomed;
- (c) Town and Parish Clerks should also be offered training;
- (d) Town and Parish Councils should provide the required funding for their training, however a small amount of funding was being offered by the City Council in order to assist Town and Parish Councillors;
- (e) The prioritisation of training on the planning process was largely supported;
- (f) Training on financial awareness would also be important; and
- (g) The relevant officers would continue to discuss requirements with individual Councils.

RESOLVED – Members of the Standards Committee resolved to support the proposals set out in the report.

28 Parish and Town Council Annual Audit 2007

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report outlining the final results of the Parish and Town Council Annual Audit and the proposals for addressing these results. It was confirmed that the Monitoring Officer, the Chair of the Standards Committee and the two Parish and Town Council representatives on the Committee would meet to discuss the results and take the relevant action as outlined in paragraph 3.23 of the report.

It was reported that there was no legal requirement for the City Council to undertake such an Audit, however, the reason for doing so was to support Parish and Town Councils, alleviate any potential problems and to help to avoid receiving any complaints against them.

Members raised concerns about the intention to publicise future Parish and Town Council Audits, and it was felt that this was unnecessary. Members were informed that this decision would be considered further, and that discussions would be held with Parish and Town Councils prior to the next Audit being undertaken.

RESOLVED – Members of the Standards Committee resolved to:

- (a) receive the information contained in the report; and

(b) note the intention of the Monitoring Officer and the Chair of the Standards Committee to consider the Parish profiles and report back to the Standards Committee in due course.

29 Ethical Framework Training and Awareness Programme for Officers

The Head of HR Service Development presented a report of the Chief Officer – Human Resources regarding on-going work arising from the Ethical Audit Action Plan, including a review of recent progress and a wider assessment of responsibilities for embedding interrelated key governance issues, including issues arising from the Ethical Audit.

It was reported that briefing meetings regarding the findings of the Ethical Audit would be held for officers by the end of November, and that a set of Leadership Standards had been devised for managers, some of which would help to address the issues which had arisen as part of the Audit.

Some Members raised concerns about the Leadership Standards as it was felt that they were too prescriptive. Members were informed that the Leadership Standards were not devised because of the results of the Ethical Audit, however the Standards Committee had provided input into this process.

RESOLVED – Members of the Standards Committee resolved to note:
(a) the specific position regarding Ethical Governance awareness; and
(b) how the work detailed in the report is being used to strengthen overall approaches to embed good governance.

30 Ethical Audit 2007: Results and Proposals for Action

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report informing the Committee of the results from the 2007 Ethical Audit that surveyed employees of Leeds City Council graded SO2 and below, and of the resulting action that is being taken to address the issues identified by the survey results.

It was confirmed that it is the responsibility of individual departments to ensure that their officers are aware of the Officer Code of Conduct. In response to Members' concerns regarding the outcomes of the Audit, it was reported that the combined 2006 and 2007 Ethical Audit Action Plan (which includes the actions reported at Minute 29) would help to address the issues.

RESOLVED - Members of the Standards Committee resolved to note the findings of the Audit and the areas for development and improvement.

31 Standards Board for England Annual Review 2007-08

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report outlining the contents of the Standards Board for England's Annual Review for 2007-08.

RESOLVED – Members of the Standards Committee resolved to note the information in the report.

32 Complaints referred to the Standards Board for England from 1st October 2007 to 9th May 2008

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report informing the Committee of the number of complaints referred to the Standards Board for England in relation to Members of Leeds City Council and local Parish or Town Councillors within the area, under the Members' Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED – Members of the Standards Committee resolved to note the contents of the report.

33 Standards Committee Communications Plan

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report regarding the review of the Standards Committee's Communications Plan, and sought Members' approval of the proposed amendments.

RESOLVED – Members of the Standards Committee resolved to approve the communications plan attached to the report at Appendix 1.

34 Local Government Chronicle Award Entry

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report regarding the Leeds City Council entry to the 'Standards and Ethics' category of the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards 2009.

RESOLVED – Members of the Standards Committee resolved to note the information in the report and the attached appendix.

35 Standards Committee Work Programme

RESOLVED – Members of the Standards Committee resolved to note the work programme.