

## Standards Committee

Wednesday, 11th April, 2007

### PRESENT:

#### Independent Members

Mike Wilkinson (Chair) (Independent Member)  
C Grant (Independent Member)  
Rosemary Greaves (Reserve Independent Member)

#### Councillors

E Nash G Kirkland

#### Parish Members

Councillor Mrs P Walker Pool in Wharfedale Parish Council  
Councillor John C Priestley East Keswick Parish Council (Reserve Member)

### APOLOGIES:

J L Carter

#### **87 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.

#### **88 Exclusion of public**

There were no resolutions to exclude the public.

#### **89 Late items**

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

#### **90 Declaration of interests**

There were no declarations of personal/prejudicial interest for the purpose of section 81(3) of the Local Government Act 2000 and paragraphs 9 to 12 of the Members' Code of Conduct.

#### **91 Minutes of the previous meeting**

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting  
to be held on Tuesday, 1st May, 2007

The minutes of the Standards Committee meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2007 were approved as a correct record.

## **92 Minutes of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee**

The minutes of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2007 were received and noted.

## **93 Officer Declarations of Interests and Register of Offers of Gifts and Hospitality**

The Chief Officer of Human Resources submitted a report providing the Committee with details of what action Human Resources have taken to improve arrangements for officers to make declarations of interests and declarations of offers of gifts and hospitality.

Members of the Committee discussed:

- That the Committee is not seeking to intrude into officers' private lives, but that a balance needs to be made between private life and public interest, and that the Council needs to be more accountable;
- That there is a distinction between officers in general and those officers who are taking delegated decisions, and whether those officers taking delegated decisions are entitled to the same protection regarding their interests;
- That some Local Authorities already have a system in place for Directors and Chief Officers to make their registers publicly accessible on a voluntary basis, and that as Leeds City Council is currently undergoing a reorganisation this may be an opportune time for Leeds City Council to implement a similar system;
- That the Committee has concerns that officers at a senior level were not being monitored properly in terms of their interests; and
- That a further report was required regarding whether a public register could be made available on a voluntary basis including the interests of Directors, Chief Officers and delegated decision takers, and including further information regarding the new systems described by Human Resources after they have been implemented in all departments by May 2007.

**RESOLVED** – Members resolved to:

- Note the progress achieved; and
- To request a further report regarding whether a public register could be made available on a voluntary basis including the interests of Directors, Chief Officers and delegated decision takers, and including further information regarding the new systems described by Human Resources after they have been implemented in all departments by May 2007.

## **94 Code of Practice for the Determination of Planning Matters – Training**

The Chief Planning Officer and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report asking the Standards Committee to clarify the wording of Part 5(j), paragraph 16.1 of the Constitution, which relates to the requirement of Elected Members dealing with planning issues to attend training.

The Heads of Development and Regulatory, Planning Services, and Scrutiny and Member Development attended the meeting to answer any questions from the Committee.

Members of the Committee discussed:

- That although the training was useful, Members may not need the basic training as a matter of course;
- Whether asking Members to attend two half day training sessions was too onerous as many Members would have to take time off work;
- That it may be possible to offer the training in other formats, such as briefing notes or e-learning;
- That it was accepted and usual for people in other professions to undergo regular compulsory training, for example solicitors and magistrates;
- That Parish and Town Councillors may also benefit from the training packages referred to in the protocol, although this could not be compulsory;
- That the wording of the paragraph as proposed in the report, be amended to substitute the word “attend” with “undertake”, in order to allow Members to undertake training in other formats.

**RESOLVED** - Members of the Committee resolved to approve the amendment to Part 5(j), paragraph 16.1 of the Constitution, as proposed in paragraph 3.3 of the report, subject to the wording being amended as follows:

“Members serving on Plans Panel must undertake two training sessions each and every year: a Planning Update session, to receive guidance in relation to regulations and procedures and a Governance and Conduct session for training on declaration of personal or prejudicial interests. Failure to undertake either or both sessions will result in the Elected Member being unable to sit on Plans Panel”.

This amendment will take effect from the beginning of the 2007-08 municipal year

Under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 16.5, Councillor E Nash required it to be recorded that she voted against this decision.

## **95 Standards Board for England: Bulletin 32**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report informing Members of the Committee of the latest Standards Board for England Bulletin published on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Committee resolved to note the contents of the report and the attached Bulletin.

**96 Standards Board for England: Town and Parish Standard 09**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report notifying Members of the Committee of the latest Town and Parish Standard issued by the Standards Board for England.

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Committee resolved to note the contents of the report and the Town and Parish Standard.

**97 Adjudication Panel for England - Decisions of case tribunals**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report summarising a recent decision made by the Adjudication Panel for England regarding an allegation of misconduct against a Member.

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Committee resolved to note the recent decision of the case tribunal.

**98 Members' Register of gifts and hospitality**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report advising Members of the Committee of the number and estimated value of gifts and hospitality received by Members of the Council in this municipal year.

Members of the Committee discussed whether the number and value of gifts was to be expected and was comparable to other authorities.

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Committee resolved to:

- Note the contents of the report; and
- Request a further report in due course summarising any trends in the declarations since May 2002 to present, and whether the information in the register is comparable to that of other similar Local Authorities.

**99 E-learning module "Cracking the Code"**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report advising Members of the Committee of the release of the second part of the e-learning module 'Cracking the Code', and providing the Committee with details of how the first part of the e-learning module has been well received by Members of the Council and the significant level of interest from other bodies.

Members of the Committee discussed whether anything could be done to improve the format of the module to take account of Members who have alternative requirements, for example making the e-learning module available in paper format.

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

## **100 Ethical Audit Action Plan**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report informing Members of the Committee of the methodology adopted to create an action plan based on the results of the 2006 Ethical Audit.

Members of the Committee discussed:

- That the level of understanding amongst the public also needed to be addressed at some point, even though it would not be specifically covered in the action plan;
- That it would be necessary in due course to consider the further exploration of the ethical agenda in relation to officers of grades lower than those surveyed in the 2006 ethical audit; and
- That web streaming of Council meetings would allow more of the public to be included in the experience of the Council, although there would need to be consideration given to which meetings it would be appropriate to broadcast in that manner.

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Committee resolved to:

- Note the contents of the report; and
- Contact the report author with any comments in relation to the development of an action plan for the improvement of ethical governance in Leeds City Council.

## **101 Parish and Town Council training**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report notifying Members of the Committee of the discussion at and outcome of the meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2007 between the Chair and the two Parish representatives on the Committee.

Members of the Committee discussed whether other forms of training should also be offered to Parish and Town Councillors, in particular the two sessions on Planning Updates and Governance and Conduct issues being offered to Leeds City Councillors on Plans Panel.

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Committee resolved to note the contents of the report and the attached appendix.

## **102 Annual Report on the Monitoring Officer Protocol**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted the annual report of the Monitoring Officer required under paragraph 5 of the Monitoring Officer Protocol.

Members of the Committee discussed:

- That the other responsibilities assigned to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services strengthen the role of the Monitoring Officer,

although the workload of the Monitoring Officer had increased recently;  
and

- That all performance indicators were being met and the Standards Committee in particular was very well served by the Monitoring Officer.

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Committee resolved to:

- Note the contents of the report; and
- Request that officers carry out a full review of the Monitoring Officer Protocol in view of the developments in the role of the Monitoring Officer and the changes highlighted in the Local Government White Paper.

### **103 Feedback on amendments to the Protocol on Member/Education Leeds Relations**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report advising Members of the outcome of the consultation in relation to the proposed changes to the Protocol for Elected Member / Education Leeds Relations.

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Committee resolved to:

- Note the contents of the report;
- Approve the further amendments to the Protocol for Elected Member / Education Leeds Relations; and
- Ask the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to make the necessary amendments to the Constitution, with effect from the beginning of the 2007-08 municipal year.

### **104 Final Standards Committee Annual Report 2006-07**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report seeking the Committee's approval of the final draft of the Standards Committee Annual Report 2006-2007.

Members of the Committee suggested a series of amendments to the draft report during the meeting.

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Committee resolved to approve the final draft of the Annual Report at Appendix 1, subject to the amendments outlined in the meeting being made.

### **105 Draft work programme for 2007-08**

**RESOLVED** – Members of the Committee resolved to note the work programme and the meeting dates for the next municipal year.