



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2005 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Mrs Caroline Roberts (Independent Member) - Chair

Councillor O'Brien Councillor Mrs. Sood

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were requested to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

No declarations were made.

10. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2005, copies of which had been circulated to Members, be received, taken as read, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

11. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Corporate Director of Resources, Access and Diversity submitted a report that enabled compliance with the requirements of the Council's Corporate Governance Code. The report covered an annual review of Corporate Governance arrangements for the year 2004/05 and represented the third such annual review. The Committee were informed that the report was being also being considered by Resources, Equal Opportunities and Personnel Scrutiny Committee on 22 September 2005 and Cabinet on 26 September, and that the comments and views of this Committee would be forwarded to those meetings.

The Committee was informed that the annual review had been carried out in consultation with lead officers responsible for all Key Policies and Procedures that formed the Council's Corporate Governance Framework. The full outcome of the review was set out in Appendix 1 of the report and it was stated that there had been no identified risks to the Authority for failing to comply with its

absolute standards.

It was reported that complete assurance had only been given in respect of two of the key policies/procedures, namely Code of Conduct for Officers and the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy, and Members questioned whether the lead officers were being unnecessarily critical but Officers stated that this was probably a realistic result and that the improvement plans were constructive. Assurances were given that in respect of all other policies/strategies the delivery of the action plans would be monitored and progress reported as part of the Annual Review for 2005/06.

The Committee welcomed the report and requested that the next Annual Review report include a summary, for example in a 'traffic light' format.

The Committee noted that the number of complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman had increased from 2 to 4, and this put Leicester in an unfavourable position compared to Birmingham for instance. It was reported that three of the four complaints reported had in fact related to one planning application, but the views of Members were noted. Members also made reference to the seeming high number of local settlements relating to complaints made to the Housing Department. The Committee expressed a view that, under the recording of complaints, where a complaint crossed over several departments area of responsibilities, were these complaints recorded as such. It was stated that for the purposes of recording complaints, one department took responsibility for the complaint and the complaint was recorded under that department. However, officers stated that they would look into whether it would be practical to identify shared departmental responsibilities where appropriate.

RESOLVED:

that, subject to the comments referred to above, the Corporate Governance Annual Report 2004/05, be noted.

12. COMPLAINTS AGAINST ELECTED MEMBERS

The Town Clerk and Corporate Director of Resources, Access and Diversity briefed Members on the current number and nature of complaints against Elected Members which had been referred to the Standards Board. Members were informed that there had been no further complaints made since the last meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

13. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

With the sanction of the Chair the following item was considered as an item of urgent business on the grounds that the matters reported could not wait until the next meeting of the Committee: -

The Standards Board for England's Consultation on the Review of the Code of Conduct

14. THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND'S CONSULTATION ON THE REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Town Clerk and Corporate Director of Resources, Access and Diversity submitted a report that informed Members of the Standards Board for England's conclusions on how the Code of Conduct should be amended based on its own experience and the responses received as part of the consultation process conducted earlier in the year.

The Committee was reminded that, at their meeting held on 8 June 2005, comments and input had been formulated and had subsequently been forwarded to the Standards Board for England, these comments and views were broadly reflected in the conclusions now published by the Standards Board for England. It was reported that the report and recommendations would be forwarded to Ministers for consideration.

RESOLVED:

that the content of the report and recommendations to Ministers, arising out of the Standards Board for England's consultation on the Review of the Code of Conduct, be noted.

15. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 6.22pm.

