

## **Standards Committee – 6 October 2011**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **6 October 2011** when there were present:-

Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs C A Weston

Cllr C I Black

Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn

Cllr D Merrick

Cllr Mrs M J Webster

### **INDEPENDENT MEMBERS**

Mr M G Drage (Chairman for the meeting)

Mr S Shadbolt

### **PARISH MEMBERS**

Cllr P Beckers

Cllr Mrs D Constable

Cllr Mrs L A Vingoe

### **VISITING MEMBER**

Cllr P F A Webster

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from D J Cottis and Mrs L Walker.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

A Bugeja - Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services

M Power - Committee Administrator

### **232 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

Mr M G Drage was appointed to chair the meeting.

### **233 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Arising from the Minutes, the Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services provided an update on the progress of the Localism Bill and development of replacement Standards framework legislation. The Bill is currently at its fourth reading in the House of Lords and now includes amendments tabled that effectively will maintain independently chaired Standards Committees. The importance that Independent and Parish Members play in the governance process has been recognised. The amendments also propose maintaining a mandatory national Code as opposed to a voluntary arrangement but the proposal to abolish Standards for England remains. It is anticipated that a

clearer idea of what the Act will contain will be available to report to the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

### **234 LOCAL INVESTIGATIONS AND DETERMINATIONS**

The records of the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee meetings RDC8 and SC0010 were noted.

In response to a question, it was noted that whilst there is a requirement to publish for the purposes of the record a summary of the Sub-Committee's decision, the Committee may be considering potentially damaging and unfounded complaints, which it would not be appropriate to make public and as such the details are confidential to the members of the Sub-Committee. Although it was recognised that providing all Members of the Standards Committee with full details of the complaint could aid consistency in future Sub-Committees' deliberations, it was agreed that this must be balanced with confidentiality and that the current procedures should be retained.

#### **Resolved**

That the records of the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee meetings RDC8 and SC0010 be received.

### **235 MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2011/12 – MID PROGRAMME REVIEW**

Members considered the report of the Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services containing the mid-programme review of the 2011/12 Member Learning and Development Programme.

The following points were discussed:-

- Although Member attendance at learning and development sessions should be encouraged, it was recognised that attendance at non-mandatory sessions are at the discretion of each elected Member. Some training sessions are aimed primarily at newly elected Councillors, but can also be of benefit to experienced Members who would like to update their skills. Members may be unable to attend training sessions because of other Council commitments.
- It was felt that it was not cost effective to offer as many additional one-to-one Licensing Committee training sessions as had been the case during part one of the 2011/12 training programme.
- The Standards Committee had decided that attendance at training sessions for Committees of a quasi-judicial nature (Development, Appeals and Licensing Committees) should be made mandatory for all Members of the Committee. In response to a suggestion that equality/diversity training should also be mandatory due to a greater need for Councils to be aware of the legal requirements in this area, the Head of Legal, Estates and

Member Services reminded Members that the Council has a standard paragraph in all Committee report templates that ensures that attention is given to the equality and diversity implications of decisions. At Council Committee meetings Members have professional advice and guidance from officers around the risks associated with failure to comply with equality and diversity legislation.

- The Equalities and Diversity/Safeguarding course, scheduled to be held in part two of the programme, was to be delivered as one session because both topics came under the control of the Head of Community Services. The course would consist of an introduction to both topics, which would serve to highlight issues in these areas. A further course could be arranged in 2012/13 if there was a need to develop further any of the information covered.
- The peer mentoring organised through the Local Government Association (LGA) would be for newly appointed Executive Members who are currently in post. The cost involved in this training would be taken from the Council's Member training budget.
- The LGA Localism for the New Councillor training was free of charge and would be offered to all newly elected Members of the Council.

### **Resolved**

That the 2011/12 Member Learning and Development Mid-Programme Review is noted. (HLEMS)

The meeting closed at 8.17 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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