

Minutes of the Standards Committee

**11th September, 2015 at 2.30 pm
at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

- Present:** Councillor Lewis (Chair);
Councillor S Crumpton (Vice-Chair);
Councillor Dhallu.
- Observer:** Mr Bell (Independent Person).
- Apologies:** Councillors Ahmed, L Horton, Sanders and
Underhill.
Mr Elliot (Independent Person).

16/15 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 12th June, 2015, be confirmed as a correct record.

17/15 **Consultation on CIPFA/SOLACE – Delivering Good Governance in Local Government**

The Committee received a report and a proposed response to a consultation issued by the CIPFA/SOLACE Joint Working Group on a review of how the Framework and guidance used to ensure the delivery of good governance were working in practice.

To assist in developing an authority's approach to good governance CIPFA/SOLACE had issued *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework* and an accompanying guidance note in 2007.

The Framework urged each local authority to test its approach by:-

- Reviewing existing governance arrangements
- Developing and maintaining an up-to-date local code of governance including arrangements for ensuring ongoing effectiveness
- Reporting publicly on compliance with its own code on an annual basis and on how it had monitored the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in the year and on planned changes.

To ensure the Framework remained 'fit for purpose' the CIPFA/SOLACE Joint Working Group was reviewing the Framework. The purpose of this consultation was to see how the Framework and guidance had been working in practice and to see where further clarification or guidance was required. The aim was to publish an updated Framework and guidance in late 2015.

In response to their enquiries, members were assured that appropriate officers met regularly to review governance arrangements and practices and that the annual governance statement was attached to the Council's annual statement of accounts. Any key areas of proposed legislation or areas for improvement were also monitored.

Members noted that the proposed response to the consultation would also be reported to the Audit Committee at its meeting on 24th September, 2015.

Resolved that the response to the CIPFA/SOLACE Consultation on Delivering Good Governance in Local Government, as set out in Appendix 1, be approved.

18/15

Registers of Members' Interests and Members' Gifts and Hospitality Annual Review

The Committee was informed that the statutory requirements relating to the Register of Members' Interests were set out in Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011. The Monitoring Officer was required to establish and maintain a Register of Members' Interests which should be available for public inspection and should also include the interests of co-opted members of the Council.

The Council's present arrangements complied with the statutory provisions. A paper copy of the Register was available for inspection and individual members' interests could also be viewed on the Council's website. The Register was reviewed periodically by the Monitoring Officer and regular reminders were sent to members to update their entries.

The Committee was advised that the majority of members had reviewed their declaration of interest forms following the proposals agreed by the Committee on 13th March, 2015 (Minute No. 5/15) with regard to the review of the Member Code of Conduct. The Chair expressed his concern that two members had declined to take part in one to one meetings with senior legal staff.

The Committee also inspected the Register of Members' Gifts and Hospitality which had also been reviewed in line with the Member Code of Conduct in March, 2015. The Monitoring Officer was required to establish and maintain this record of any gift or hospitality received with an estimated value of at least £100. The Register was also available for public inspection and declarations by members were also recorded on the Committee Management Information System (CMIS).

The Committee carried out its inspections of the Registers of Members' Interests and the Members' Gifts and Hospitality.

19/15 **Allegations Update**

The Committee received an update on complaints received during 2014/15 in respect of member conduct and the outcome of those complaints. No allegations had yet been received for 2015/16.

20/15 **Case Summary**

The Committee considered a case about a former Member at Guildford Borough Council reported in the 'Local Government Lawyer'. The former Member was given a suspended sentence for pretending to be a qualified barrister during the course of her employment and through the term of her office as a Councillor.

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She was given a fourteen month sentence suspended for two years and ordered to complete 200 hundred hours community service. Members felt that this particular case, whilst interesting, had no particular useful learning points for the Committee.

(Meeting ended at 3.20 pm)

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