

REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

GENERAL REPORT

1. This report sets out a brief summary of the main items considered at the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 30 November 2007.

Standards Committee and Parish Councils

2. Officers advised that letters have been sent to Committee Members with a briefing note as requested at the last meeting. Committee Members were to make contact with the Parish Council clerks. We agreed that an update item be placed on the next agenda.

Feedback from the Standards Conference

3. I reported that I had attended the Annual Standards Assembly in October. I reported that no firm guidelines were given on the new arrangements and that there was no evidence of finances being made available for the new local filtering arrangements. A pilot had been undertaken with a number of local authorities.
4. I advised that authorities would have ten days to deal with initial complaints; the use of mediation was mentioned but no guidance was given. Other issues discussed included possible joint working; meetings to consider initial complaints being held in private; and independent members chairing sub groups.
5. We noted that guidance had been given that members could consider the initial complaint and then sit on the determination hearing. I expressed my disappointment not to have more information on the new arrangements.
6. We agreed that a meeting of the Committee be arranged for early February to set out the process for the new arrangements and to consider the size of the Committee.

Mayoral Hospitality

7. We considered the report of the Monitoring Officer on Mayoral Hospitality. We noted this item had been identified from the work programme.

Guidance to Members on Use of Resources

8. We considered the report of the Monitoring Officer on guidance for Members on the use of resources. We noted this item had been identified from the work programme.

9. We considered Appendix A and B. There were issues that should be added to Appendix A, (Support Services and General Information for Councillors), including guidance on the use of the telephone line and Members' use of rooms within the Town Hall for political and private purposes.
10. Members considered Appendix B, (Internet and e-mail acceptable use policy for Elected Members), and considered that the document would benefit from a review, to make it clear and concise.
11. It was noted that use of resources was not a major issue for the Parishes. We agreed that the guidance provided to Members on the use of Council resources be reviewed.

Local Code of Corporate Governance

12. We received the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) on the Local Code of Corporate Governance.
13. Officers reported that Corporate Governance related to accountability. CIPFA and SOLACE have reviewed existing guidance on the topic and part of this suggested authorities have a Local Code. The Audit Committee has considered the financial side of the Code with the ethical side being considered by the Standards Committee.
14. Members were requested to feed back any comments to officers as the Code was in draft form and could be amended. Chorley Council is one of the first authorities to introduce a Local Code.
15. We supported the Local Code of Corporate Governance.

News from the Standards Board/Adjudication Panel

16. We considered the report of the Monitoring Officer considering the recommendations of the Adjudication Panel and noted the actions taken.

Work Undertaken to Promote the Code of Conduct

17. Officers reported that a training session had been held on 19 September for all Parish Councillors on the Code of Conduct and that the slides and handouts had been distributed to all Parish Council clerks.
18. Guidance on predetermination and bias and mayoral hospitality had been posted on the loop, with copies of the predetermination and bias guidance having been sent to the Parish Council clerks.

19. The required notice advertising the adoption of a revised code by the Borough Council and twenty-one of the Parish Councils had been published in a local newspaper and the Council's newspaper. Copies of this had been sent to Parish Council clerks.
20. All Parishes had been requested to confirm the names of their Parish Councillors and those who had not returned financial and other interest forms had been chased. Letters detailing the mentoring arrangements had been sent to Committee Members and Parish Council clerks.
21. We agreed that a letter be sent to two Parish Councils requesting confirmation that the revised Code of Conduct had been adopted.

Standards Committee Work Programme

22. We considered the work programme and added the Member Officer Protocol to the list of other topics. Officers reported that Internal Audit had undertaken a review of the Code of Conduct which had received a "sound assurance" rating. Two minor recommendations had been made and actioned.
23. It was suggested that the training DVD be shown to members of the Development Control Committee and at a Member Learning Hour.

Training DVD from the Standards Board for England

24. Members watched the training DVD recently published by the Standards Board for England.

Recommendation

25. The Council is recommended to note the report.

MR RA ELLWOOD
CHAIR OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

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There are no background papers to this report.