

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Thursday, 13th October, 2011 at 6.00 p.m.
In Committee Room 4, The Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

The Bishop of Dudley (Independent Chairman)

Councillors Ahmed, Burston, Hanif, Kettle and J.Woodall; Father A Williams.

Officers:-

Interim Assistant Director, (Law and Governance) and Mr J Jablonski
(Directorate of Corporate Resources).

7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of
Councillors Mrs Martin and Ms Partridge and Mrs V Answorth.

8 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBER

It was reported that Councillor J.Woodall had been appointed as a substitute
member for Councillor Mrs Martin for this meeting of the Committee only.

9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No member made a declaration of interest, in accordance with the Members'
Code of Conduct, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

10 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23rd June,
2011, be approved as a correct record and signed.

11 CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICY

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on the monitoring of the
operation of the Council's Confidential Reporting Policy.

The Interim Assistant Director Law and Governance in his presentation of the content of the report and Appendix 1 to the report submitted, which was a copy of the Policy with a minor update, as indicated in paragraph 5 of the report, referred in particular to the issues raised by Directorates as indicated in paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 of the report submitted.

Arising from the presentation given members commented on the issues referred to in paragraphs 6 to 8 of the report and requested further information in relation to those issues.

RESOLVED

1. That the information contained in the report, and Appendix 1 to the report, submitted on the outcome of the recent monitoring of the Confidential Reporting Policy, be noted.
2. That the following information be e-mailed to Members of the Committee:
 - a) In respect of the two issues raised in the Children's Services Directorate, paragraph 6 of the report, how long it was proposed that the matters reported on would be monitored for; and
 - b) the outcomes of the eight investigations undertaken in relation to the Directorates of Corporate Resources and Adult, Community and Housing Services referred to in paragraphs 7 and 8 of the report.

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ANNUAL REPORT: MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on the Annual Report on the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct.

Arising from the presentation and consideration on the content of the report submitted, it was:-

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on the Annual Report on the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct, be noted with particular reference to the action points set out in paragraphs 12 to 14 of the report, and that the report be referred to the Council for approval.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on the current position concerning the Code of Conduct for Employees, a copy of which was attached as Appendix 1 to the report submitted.

During his presentation of the content of the report, and Appendix 1 to the report, submitted, a copy of the Code of Conduct for Employees, reference was made to a proposed amendment to the wording of paragraph 29 of the Code that had been tabled at the meeting.

Arising from the presentation of the content of the report, Appendix 1 to the report and the proposed amended wording to paragraph 29 of the Code it was:-

RESOLVED

1. That the information contained in the report, Appendix 1 to the report and proposed amended wording to paragraph 29 of the Code, submitted on the current position concerning the Code of Conduct for Employees, be noted and that the Council be recommended to adopt the revised Code as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and as further updated by the amended wording tabled at the meeting in respect of paragraph 29 of the code.
2. That, subject to resolution 1 above, the Monitoring Officer be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of this Committee, in approximately twelve months time, on the operation of the amended wording of paragraph 29 of the Code regarding the registering in the gifts and hospitality register of insignificant items of token value, that is of less than £10 and that such report include a copy of the log of entries from the date of approval by the Council of the updated Code of Conduct for Employees together with any related issues arising therefrom such as any instances of disciplinary action having been taken.

THE LOCALISM BILL/LOCAL STANDARDS FRAMEWORK – CURRENT POSITION

The Interim Assistant Director of Law and Governance reported that the House of Lords was considering a number of amendments to the Localism Bill and that amendments had been tabled, with support from representatives of all political parties, to the effect that Councils must have a code, consistent with the Nolan Principles with a Standards Committee to enforce it.

It was anticipated that the Bill would reach Royal Assent by the end of this year and therefore may contain provisions regarding a National Code of Conduct with provision for a Standards Committee. However, the content and extent of the Code was likely to be less demanding than the current Code of Conduct for Members' but may still have a form of sanction to be applied to Members in breach of the Code.

RESOLVED

That the information given at the meeting ,regarding the current position in respect of the Localism Bill and the Local Standards Framework, be noted.

The meeting ended at 6.40 p.m.

CHAIRMAN