

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Tuesday 12th April 2011 at 6.00 p.m.
in Committee Room 4, The Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillors Kettle, Mrs P Martin and Ms Partridge; Mrs V Ainsworth and Father A Williams

Officers:-

The Director of Corporate Resources (Monitoring Officer), Interim Assistant Director (Law and Governance), Head of Audit Services and Mr J Jablonski (all Directorate of Corporate Resources).

24 CHAIRMAN FOR THIS MEETING

In the absence of the Chairman (the Bishop of Dudley) it was:-

RESOLVED

That Mrs Ainsworth be the Chairman for this meeting of the Committee.

(Mrs Ainsworth in the Chair)

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of the Bishop of Dudley and Councillors Burston and Hanif.

26 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.

27 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th January, 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed.

FUTURE OF THE LOCAL STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted updating the Committee on issues concerning the future of the Local Standards Framework. Attached as an appendix to the report submitted was a paper prepared jointly by the Local Government Group and the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (ACSeS) entitled Maintaining High Ethical Standards in Local Government.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted updating the Committee on issues concerning the future of the Local Standards Framework be noted and that a further report on the progress of Localism Bill, containing provisions relating to this matter, be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

THE ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY

A report of the Director of Corporate Resources and Monitoring Officer was submitted on proposed amendments to the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy a copy of which was attached as Appendix 1 to the report submitted.

Arising from the presentation given on the content of the report, and Appendix 1 to the Report, submitted by the Head of Audit Services members made a number of comments relating in particular to the awareness of Members, in particular those new to the Council, of fraud issues. They also responded to comments as to whether, given the involvement of the Audit Committee in issues relating to fraud, it was more appropriate that future reports on the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy should be considered by the Audit Committee and not this Committee.

RESOLVED

1. That the Council be recommended to approve the amendments to the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy as contained in the revised Strategy attached as Appendix 1 to the report submitted.
2. That the Head of Audit Services be requested to update the leaflet currently provided to Officers on fraud awareness so that it could be included in the induction pack to be given to newly elected Members of the Committee at their initial induction session in May, 2011 and at subsequent induction sessions.

3. That, in future, the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy be considered by the Audit Committee, and not this Committee, and that the Director of Corporate Resources be requested to arrange for any necessary amendments to the Council's Constitution to facilitate this decision.
4. That the Head of Audit be requested to e-mail to Members of the Committee, in due course, a note on the differences between anti-fraud and counter-fraud measures referred to at the meeting.

30

ELECTED MEMBER FEEDBACK – CONTACT WITH THE COUNCIL

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted updating the Committee on the actions taken following a previous report to the Committee on the Code of Conduct for employees, but specifically in relation to feedback received from Elected Members when contacting the Council, either directly to Directorates or via Dudley Council Plus. Attached at Appendix 1 to the report submitted was a summary of the key issues highlighted by Members arising from the feedback requested.

Arising from the presentation given on the content of the report, and Appendix 1 to the report, submitted the Monitoring Officer also informed the Committee of the further action that had been taken in relation to the consideration of this matter at a meeting of the Council's Corporate Board in that the Directors would be looking into the way their Directorates dealt with Member queries so as to identify and overcome any blockages to Members receiving information requested. He also reported that this matter would be further discussed at the Corporate Assistant Director's Group to further facilitate this matter.

In responding to a question from a Member the Monitoring Officer commented that if Members had any ongoing concerns they could report them direct to the Director concerned or to himself.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, Appendix 1 to the report and as reported at the meeting, be noted.

31

REQUEST FOR DISPENSATION – SHADOW DUDLEY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BOARD

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on the proposed grant of a dispensation to elected Members and voting co-opted Members of the Shadow Dudley Health and Wellbeing Board.

Arising from the presentations of the report by the Monitoring Officer and the consideration given to a proviso regarding the disclosure of significant interests it was:-

RESOLVED

That approval be given to the grant of a general dispensation to elected Members and voting non-elected representatives of the Shadow Dudley Health and Wellbeing Board subject to those Members and representatives being required to disclose any interests that they or a relevant person as defined in paragraph 8(b)(2) of the Members' Code of Conduct have which may be so significant that they would be likely to prejudice their judgement of the public interest.

The meeting ended at 7.17 p.m.

CHAIRMAN