

MINUTES of the meeting of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held at 10am on Friday 28 October 2011 at County Hall, Kingston upon Thames.

These minutes will be confirmed by the Standards Committee at its next meeting.

Members:

- +* Mr Simon Edge (Chairman)
- +* Mrs Marion Roberts (Vice-Chairman)
- + Ms Karen Heenan
Eber Kingston
- + Mrs Sally De la Bedoyere
- * Mr Geoff Marlow
- * Mr David Munro
Mrs Dorothy Ross-Tomlin
Mrs Lavinia Sealy
- * Mr Colin Taylor

Substitutes:

- * Chris Frost
- * Mr David Ivison

- + = Independent Representatives
- * = Present
- x = Present for part of the meeting

Officers present:

Ann Charlton (Monitoring Officer)

Rachel Crossley (Deputy Monitoring Officer)

PART 1
IN PUBLIC

29/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were given for Mrs Sally De La Bedoyere, Mrs Lavinia Sealy, Mrs Dorothy Ross-Tomlin and Eber Kingston.

Mr David Ivison and Chris Frost were substitutes.

30/11 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: 4 July 2011 [Item 2]

The minutes were agreed as a true and correct record.

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

None.

Resolved:

The minutes were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

31/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

Mr Simon Edge declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 6 (Recruitment of Independent Representatives on Standards Committee). He would leave the room for the duration of the item.

32/11 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

None were received.

33/11 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 5]

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- The Monitoring Officer reported that the revised Member/Officer Protocol had been drafted and circulated to senior managers for comment. Comments were now being collated and the Protocol would be presented to the Committee at its meeting in December.
- In relation to the abolition of the Standards Regime, the Monitoring Officer advised that the Bill was currently in report stage in the House of Lords and that Royal assent was expected in April.
- It was noted that Internal Audit were currently reviewing the Member register of interests. The Committee agreed that the audit reported be added to the Standards Committee forward work programme for consideration.

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

- The Member/Officer Protocol be presented to the Committee in December.
- That the internal audit review of Members' register of interests be reported to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

The recommendations tracker and forward work programme be noted.

34/11 RECRUITMENT OF INDEPENDENT REPRESENTATIVES ON STANDARDS COMMITTEE [Item 6]

Mr Simon Edge left the room for the duration of the item. Mrs Marion Roberts took the Chair.

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- It was noted that two independent representatives (Mr Simon Edge and Mrs Karen Heenan) were nearing the end of their terms of office. Mr Edge was nearing the end of his first term of office and Mrs Heenan the second term of office. In line with the Constitution, Mrs Heenan was not eligible to apply for a further term.
- The Committee were asked to consider either undertaking a full recruitment exercise for one or two independent representatives or inviting one or both representatives to continue for a fixed term.

- During the discussion, Mr David Munro suggested that the Committee should continue on the assumption that they would continue beyond the formal abolition of the Standards Regime. He recommended that Mr Edge be reappointed for a further term of 4 years and that a recruitment exercise be undertaken to replace the representative reaching the end of her second term.
- It was noted that that due to the size of the Committee, it was only necessary to have 3 independent representatives. However, reducing the number of independent representatives could make quorate sub-committee meetings more difficult.
- The Monitoring Officer clarified that the 2 term limit had been adopted by the Council so that independent representatives did not lose objectivity. However, one option for the Committee to consider was recommending to Council that this rule be changed to allow an extension to Mrs Heenan's term.
- It was noted that with the current number of Members on the Standards Committee (10), it was a requirement to have at least 3 independent representatives. However, if the independent representatives were not reappointed and the overall number dropped to 8, there would only be a requirement to have 2 independent representatives.
- Following the discussion the majority agreed to recommend to Council that Mr Edge be appointed for a further 4 year term. There would not be a change to the Constitution that would allow Mrs Karen Heenan to apply for an extension to her second term of office. The majority agreed that there should not be a recruitment exercise at this stage to replace Mrs Heenan and that the vacancy should be carried until at least the date of the Royal assent.

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

That in due course, the Committee Chairman write to Mrs Karen Heenan to thank her for her services on the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee **RECOMMEND** to County Council that Mr Simon Edge be appointed as an independent representative on the Standards Committee for a further term of 4 years (May 2012-May 2016).

Mr Simon Edge rejoined the Committee for Item 7, and took the Chair.

35/11 CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS REPORT (Schools and Learning – Services for young people) [Item 7]

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- The Committee were disappointed that there was nobody available to present this report and agreed that any questions would be channelled through the Committee Manager to the relevant officers.
- It was noted that the Committee thought that the consideration of any matters arising from this report was more appropriately within the remit of the relevant select committee.

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

Members to send any questions or comments relating to the report to the Committee Manager.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

36/11 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS – IMPACT OF REMOVAL OF STAGE 3 UPDATE [Item 8]

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- The Committee noted that the removal of stage 3 had not had a detrimental impact on complaints handling process.

Actions/Further Information to be Provided:

None.

RESOLVED:

That the report was noted.

37/11 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING:

12 December 2011

Meeting closed: 10.29am

Chairman