

Minutes

Standards Committee

Tuesday, 1 March 2011

Meeting held at Civic Centre, High Street,
Uxbridge



HILLINGDON
LONDON

Published on: 4 March 2011

Come into effect on: Immediately

Members Present: Allan Edwards (Chairman), Malcolm Ellis (Vice-Chairman), James Keys (Independent member), Councillors Barrett, Corthorne, Harmsworth, Hensley, Khursheed, Lewis, Markham and Riley

Officers Present: Raj Alagh and Lloyd White

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 November 2010 were approved as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. CONFIRMATION THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THOSE MARKED PART II, IN PRIVATE

5. REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's Work Programme for 2011/12 was noted.

6. STANDARDS AND ETHICS INDICATORS

Members considered the annual report providing summary information on a range of topics by which to gauge the corporate health of the authority in relation to standards and ethics. Members welcomed the report and recognised the usefulness of the information but also felt that some of the information would be more useful if it were accompanied by comparator statistics on similar topics from neighbouring authorities.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that the Head of Democratic Services be asked to provide comparative data from other authorities where possible for future reports.

7. GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY ANNUAL REPORT

Members noted the contents of the annual report summarising the declarations of gifts and hospitality to officers. It was suggested that, in future a similar summary of

the declarations made by Members should also be included in the report. It was noted that these details were already available on line.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that future reports include a summary of the declarations made by Members.

8. FUTURE OF THE STANDARDS BOARD REGIME

Members were reminded of the government proposals to abolish the current Standards Board regime as set out in the Localism Bill introduced to Parliament in December 2010. The government's proposals were summarised as follows:

- to abolish Standards for England;
- to remove the First-tier Tribunal's (Local Government Standards in England) jurisdiction over Member conduct;
- to remove the compulsory national Code of Conduct for Councillors and the requirement to have a Standards Committee and to allow councils to choose whether or not they wish to have a local code or Standards Committee;
- to continue the requirement for Members to register and declare personal interests and to create a new criminal offence relating to failure to comply with this requirement;
- to remove the restriction on 'pre-determination' or 'bias', allowing Members to speak or vote on issues about which they have previously campaigned about or expressed an opinion.

Members discussed in detail the implications of these proposals and the potential risks they presented to the future ethical standards of the authority. Members felt strongly that there should be a local Code of Conduct so that the electorate could have confidence in the way Members conducted themselves and decisions were taken. Although the proposals were not expected to be implemented until 2012, it was suggested that detailed options should be presented to the next meeting of the Committee for the adoption of a local Code of Conduct and Standards regime in order that proposals could be put forward to Council for adoption.

RESOLVED: That the Borough Solicitor and Head of Democratic Services produce an options paper for Members' consideration prior to the next meeting of the Committee, relating to the introduction of a local Code of Conduct and Standards regime.

9. COMPLAINTS MONITORING

This item was discussed in Part II without the press or public present as it contained confidential information as defined in the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

The Committee noted details of all the complaints made against Members within the last six months.