

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 30 June 2009

<u>Present:</u>		Brian Cummings (Chair)	
	Councillors	AR McLachlan C Teggin L Fraser K Hayes	WJ Davies C Meaden A Bridson A Taylor
<u>Deputies</u>	Councillors	L Rowlands (In place of C Blakeley)	
<u>Independent Members</u>		Ken Harrison (Vice-Chair)	Alex Nuttall
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	C Blakeley	

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Committee were invited to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any of the items on the agenda and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest. No declarations were made.

2 MINUTES

Resolved - That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 30 March 2009, be accepted as a correct record.

The following actions were noted:

- (i) Register of Gifts and Hospitality (minute 39) – records regarding gifts and hospitality should be forwarded to senior committee officers until this facility is on line.
- (ii) Annually Assembly of Standards Committees – the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management, will progress this matter.
- (iii) Ombudsman Complaint – the issue of transition from child care to adult care will be reviewed by the appropriate overview and scrutiny committees and the results of their scrutiny will be reported to this committee.

3 ETHICAL GOVERNANCE 2008/09

Further to minute 36 (30/3/09), Liz Temple-Murray, the Audit Manager, presented the final report following the Audit Commission's Review of Ethical Governance within the Authority. She referred to the discussion at the previous meeting regarding interviewees' comments and reported that the EG survey comments were published

in full and could be viewed on the Council's Internet site (Web Library) [Library document - Wirral Ethical Governance Survey - Comments](#)

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management, reported that the Action Plan included specific dates to address the recommendations contained in the EG report and he would report back on progress made.

The Chair commented that the EG Report was positive indicating that the Council had a good understanding of the key ethical governance issues and the action needed to promote and maintain standards. He highlighted some of the key recommendations in the Action Plan:-

- to raise the profile of the Standards Committee and communicate its work to a wider public;
- improve public confidence through effective ethical governance arrangements;
- review the level of training for members and officers on the ethical agenda

Resolved –

(1) That the report and action plan be noted.

(2) That regular progress reports on the action plan be presented to future meetings of this committee.

4 GOVERNANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

Further to minute 38 (30/3/09) Liz Temple-Murray, the Audit Manager, presented a report following the Audit Commission's Review of Partnership Governance. The purpose of the review was to consider whether the recommendations from previous work had been implemented and whether key lines of enquiry within the Use of Resources Assessment and Value for Money were likely to be satisfied. The main conclusions of the report were that the Council generally worked well with partners and there were some examples of positive outcomes.

The recommendations in the report formed the basis of an Action Plan and identified some specific actions for improvement. It highlighted the need to strengthen corporate arrangements for governing partnerships and noted that the Council was making good progress in addressing some of these issues through the roll out of its Partnership Toolkit which would provide a structure for partnership governance.

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management, responded to questions from members regarding:

- use of the toolkit and training and support for officers, members, and partners, to clarify roles and responsibilities;
- the role of chief officers and line managers;
- the structure for partnership governance provided through the use of the toolkit;
- arrangements for the member training programme.

Resolved –

- (1) That the report and action plan be noted.
- (2) That regular progress reports on the action plan be presented to future meetings of this committee.

5 **OMBUDSMAN REPORT-REPORT NO 07/C/03447**

Further to minute 6 (30/6/08) when the Acting Monitoring Officer was authorised to respond to the Ombudsman concerning a finding of maladministration and injustice against the Council regarding Mr H and his child S, the Interim Head of Legal and Member Services submitted a report outlining action which had been taken since that meeting.

The Interim Head of Legal and Member Services had reviewed the matter in April 2009 and a copy to the Ombudsman of her letter dated 17 April 2009 was attached to the report (Appendix 1). The Ombudsman had advised that when the Standards Committee had received the latest correspondence between the Council and the Ombudsman and was informed in connection with the progress made by child S, the Ombudsman was likely to consider that all outstanding issues had been resolved. It was intended that a separate report would be presented to a future meeting concerning the role of the Standards Committee in connection with specific complaints to the Ombudsman.

In response to questions from members regarding implementation of the Ombudsman's recommendations, the Director reported that Howard Cooper, Director of Children's Services, had taken personal responsibility for this matter and the lessons learnt from this case had been cascaded through his department.

It was noted that this committee's terms of reference included consideration reports arising from ombudsman investigations. The committee discussed its approach to this matter and indicated its wish to be informed of the higher level cases which result in findings of maladministration and reduction in service standards.

Resolved - That the Committee note that the Council has implemented the recommendations made in the Ombudsman's Report issued on 10 April 2008, having accepted the findings of the Ombudsman, and also note the progress being made by child S at the school.