

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 29 September 2009

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

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to consider whether they had personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they were. No such declarations were made.

11 MINUTES

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management, submitted the minutes of the meetings held on 30 June, 16 July (Standards Hearing Panel) and 7 August (Consideration meeting).

Resolved – That the minutes be received.

12 MINUTES - MATTERS ARISING

(a) Annual Assembly of Standards Committees – It was noted that Councillor Blakeley had given his place at this event to the independent vice-chair.

(b) Governance of Partnerships Action Plan – the Chair asked for a progress report to the next meeting in accordance with the regular monitoring arrangements agreed by the committee.

(c) Investigation of Complaints – Members highlighted their concerns regarding the cost implications associated with investigation of complaints and the delays in bringing these matters to the committee for determination

13 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL LETTER AND CURRENT PERFORMANCE

The Director of Finance submitted and reported upon the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter (Appendix 1) setting out the number of complaints

made to the LGO about the Council, complaint outcomes, how they had been dealt with and response times, and contacts recorded through the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

The Director reported that liaison with the LGO was now undertaken by the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services section with further changes implemented to maintain the improving response times which, in the current year, had improved to 16.2 days. He outlined the procedures for the handling of complaints indicating that his section was responsible for the administration and processing of complaints which were referred to the appropriate departments for detailed investigation and response which would be in conjunction with the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management.

The Director responded to questions from members regarding the summary information provided by the LGO. The following matters were highlighted:-

- the difference between response times and the resolution of complaints;
- the need for more detailed analysis of the figures, particularly in relation to complaints about library closures;
- procedural changes to include statements of reasons relating to individual decisions of an Ombudsman;
- delays in the process for determination of complaints which were also identified in the minutes of the Standards Committee (see minute ante 12);
- the need for benchmarking with other metropolitan authorities.

Resolved – That the Committee notes the contents of the report.

14 **COMPLAINT TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN - RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OFF STATHAM ROAD, NOCTORUM**

The Committee considered a report outlining the findings of the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) following a complaint by the owner of 50 Newdales Close, Beechwood with regard to application reference APP/2006/5560 and the grant of planning permission for the erection of 33 No.dwellings on land adjacent to 84 Statham Road, Noctorum.

Resolved –

(1) That the Committee note the report and the observations of the Local Government Ombudsman.

(2) That the Committee support the proposal that both members and Development Control officers undertake a refresh training workshop in relation to the overall context of planning and development control, as set out in paragraph 6.2 of the report.

15 **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR**

Attendance at Meetings – Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

Further to minute 26 (Dates of Meetings – 1/12/08) when arrangements to dates of meetings of this committee were changed to allow the Director of Law, HR and Asset

Management, to attend meetings of the Audit and Risk Management Committee, Councillor Blakeley requested an explanation as to why the Director had not attended tonight's meeting.

It was moved by Councillor Blakeley and seconded by Councillor Fraser that:-

"That the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management, be requested to attend the next meeting and explain the reasons for the change in circumstances that has resulted in him not attending tonight's meeting of this committee."

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Teggins and seconded by councillor McLachlan that:-

" That the Director be invited to email members with an explanation as to the reasons why he was unable to attend tonight's meeting of this committee."

The amendment was put and carried (8:3)

Resolved (8:3) - That the Director be invited to email members with an explanation as to the reasons why he was unable to attend tonight's meeting of this committee."