



Standards Committee

Date:	Monday, 25 January 2010
Time:	6.00 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA

1. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to consider whether they have personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they are.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING (Pages 1 - 6)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September and 7 December.

3. STANDARDS COMMITTEE - ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION (Pages 7 - 10)

The Chair has identified a number of issues for further discussion following his attendance at the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees.

4. EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RECOMMENDATION: That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

5. INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS - UPDATE

Verbal report

6. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR

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."

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STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Monday, 7 December 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Brian Cummings (Chair)	
	Councillors	P Williams C Blakeley
<u>Deputies</u>	Councillors	G Davies (In place of AR McLachlan)
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	AR McLachlan

16 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair and Councillors G Davies, and P Williams each declared a personal interest in respect of the appointment of a new independent member by virtue of their previous knowledge of one of the applicants. Councillor C Blakeley also declared a personal interest in respect of the appointment of a new independent member by virtue of his previous knowledge of one of the applicants .

17 INDEPENDENT MEMBER - APPOINTMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Following advertisement in the local press inviting applications to fill a vacancy for an independent member three applications were received. It was recommended that arrangements be made for the Chair and the three party spokespersons to interview applicants, and that they be authorised to submit their recommendation direct to the Council meeting on 14 December.

Resolved – That a panel comprising the Chair and the three party spokespersons be established to interview the applicants, and that the panel be authorised to submit its recommendation direct to the Council meeting on 14 December.

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STANDARDS COMMITTEE

- Build relationships between L.A. and public
 - should be advertised in local press and public buildings. Make public aware of Committee.
- Must be:- Impartial, dutiful, informative, factual and evidential
- Confirm percentage of Officers and Members accept the Code of Conduct and the Standards Committee.
- Apparently there will be a Revised Code in 2010.
- Beware of “tit for tat” complaints. There should be no penalty for putting forward ‘Frivolous’ complaints.
- Discuss with Chief Executive what other roles should be carried out by the Independent Members of Committee.
- Committee should have the opportunity to discuss feedback from the Ombudsman.
- Chairman of Standards Committee is expected to have regular meetings with the Monitoring Officer/Borough Solicitor.
- Hold a review to enable all applicable to understand and interpret the Standards Committee.
- Preach “we can make a difference”. Take up the challenge and invoke our standards.
- Values:- Strive for higher values, conduct, respect, ethics and standards. These and the code must be integral to all Council activities.
- Members must receive training on the Code of Conduct.
- Officers must take strong action against any aboration of the Code.
- Members of the Standards Committee should have access to the Annual Report and attend Council Meetings (Independent Members).
- Standards Committee should build relationships with Officers and Members.
- Chairman of Committee should have meetings with group leaders – build trust.
- Should share experiences with neighbouring Councils.

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- Promote awareness of Standards Committee to schools and local organisations/groups.
- Do not become at odds with elected members; encourage members to attend meetings to raise issues.
- Engage with Councillors. Always appreciate that we are appointed not elected (Independent).
- Be fair and transparent. Rate your independence! "You are serving for the greater good of the Community".
- Standards Committee is a "friend, not a foe, a guide dog not a watch dog".
- You must be made aware of concerns of people in the street.
- Must keep Independence – Be careful not to be seen to be more friendly with one group than another.
- Passionate about ethics and standards.
- Monitoring Officers needs:- Courage, motivation, trust, relationships, performance, be moral.
- Be aware of the community impact of committee (letters page in local press/statements etc.)
- What is the perception of public?
Trust and citizens?
Councillors & Officers?
Democracy?
- Bullying of Officers will not be acceptable.
- Planning Committee – what are its protocols?
Can these be explained?
Training – in view of recent events.

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Social Services Similarly

Setting Standards

Councillors Expenses?

Issues for discussion.

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