

Standards Committee

Tuesday 11 October 2011

PRESENT:

Mr Steve Pearce, in the Chair.
Councillors Mrs Aspinall, Drean, Jordan and Lowry.

Independent Members: Roy Campbell, Corinne Farrell and John Williams.

Apology for absence: Councillor Dr. Mahony

Also in attendance: Tim Howes, Assistant Director for Democracy and Governance, Linda Torney, Assistant Head of Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer, and Katey Johns, Democratic Support Officer.

The meeting started at 10 am and finished at 10.30 am.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

18. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by members in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

19. **MINUTES**

Agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2011.

20. **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE WORKING GROUP**

Members considered the draft minutes of the working group and discussed the format that a performance review may take. One option included an informal meeting comprising three members of the Standards Committee (e.g. Chair plus one member from each political party) to review competency and performance against the independent member job description and person specification. A report could then be produced identifying areas for improvement or appropriate training. On balance, however, it was felt that it was more appropriate that a more informal approach was introduced with the Chair and Monitoring Officer canvassing opinion from political groups.

Agreed the recommendations of the working group as follows –

- (1) the process for making a complaint about a member's conduct should be made clear to all members;

- (2) that independent members should be appointed for a fixed period (as at present), but that should be subject to annual review;
- (3) that the process under (2) above should be recommended to other committees which appoint independent/co-opted members.

21. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

22. **COSTS OF THE STANDARDS PROCESS**

The Monitoring Officer updated the Committee on the costs of the Standards process and the current situation regarding progress of the Localism Bill. Members were advised that –

- (a) internal costs for time spent on Standards-related work were not recorded by Democratic Support or Legal and were, therefore, not available;
- (b) the total amount spent on external fees over the last two years was in the order of £22, 265;
- (c) the Localism Bill would probably receive Royal Assent early in 2012;
- (d) contrary to earlier versions of the Bill, it now appeared likely that there would be a compulsory code of conduct for Local Authorities to adopt;
- (e) there were currently no outstanding cases for consideration by the Standards Committee.

Members welcomed the fact that council's would have to adopt a code of conduct and, following discussion, it was recommended that a copy of the Nolan Principles be displayed in each of the committee and members' rooms.

23. **DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next scheduled meeting of the Standards Committee will take place at 10 am on Wednesday 14 December 2011 in the Council House.

24. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.