

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

6 February 2006

FORUM OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES

REPORT OF CITY SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR

Contact Officers: Chris Ashcroft Tel No: 01962 848284

RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Attached for Members information is a report from Prof. Johns (Independent Member) on the most recent meeting of the above Forum, held on 3 October 2005 at Rushmoor BC offices.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Prof. Johns be thanked for his report, which is noted.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

The Council to communicate openly and honestly.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

None

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

Report from Prof Johns

Report on meeting of the Forum of Independent Members of Standards Committees held at 10.00 a.m. on 3 October 2005 at Council Offices of Rushmoor Borough Council Farnborough. Mr Keith Hodge (Rushmoor) took the Chair.

This meeting was organised by Karen Limmer, Solicitor to Rushmoor Borough Council

There were 28 Independent members of 22 Standards Committees present.

It was felt that Independent Members had an important and useful role to play in the functioning of Standards Committees and observations on the functioning of other Council meetings.

It was agreed that a 'Forum of Independent members of Standards Committees' was a body which could make a useful contribution to the work of Town, Borough or City Councils.

The role of Standards Committees, it was suggested, appeared to be evolving in some authorities on the lines of an Audit Committee by overseeing the Governance of Councils.

It was clearly important that there should be a mechanism whereby an up to date list of all the members of the 'Independent Forum' should be maintained. The difficulties of maintaining such a list, because it would need to be continually reviewed, were recognised. Who should maintain this list and be responsible for keeping it up to date was not agreed. It was suggested that the Standards Board might be the appropriate body to maintain the list but it was the feeling of the meeting that the Board would not be willing to take on such a task.

Clearly the ultimate accuracy of any such list would devolve on the administrator of each City, Town or Borough Standards Committee. A view was expressed that enthusiasm to provide this information was sometimes questionable.

A report was given on the Annual Assembly of the Independent Members of Standards Committees held in Birmingham in September. Those who attended gave differing opinions on the overall value of the gathering. There was however agreement that the 'workshops' were a valuable exercise in demonstrating the role of Standards Committees. The Annual Assembly unanimously agreed that an Annual Report of the work of the SC should be presented to Councils.

At the conclusion of the main business the Chief Executive of the Rushmoor Borough Council, Mr Andrew Lloyd, gave an excellent presentation on the interface of the political and management elements in local government. He stressed the importance of trust and respect for one another. In all matters "Fire prevention is better than fire fighting".

NB In spite of several requests, it has not been possible to see a copy of the draft minutes of this meeting. The above is an unconfirmed summary of the main points raised at the meeting.

RBJ
December 2005