

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**5 April 2006**

Attendance:

Mr J Spokes (Independent Member) (Chairman) (P)

Councillors:

Cook (P)  
Hoare  
Lipscomb (P)

Nelmes (P)  
Quar (P)  
Rees

Independent Members and Parish Representatives:

Professor R Johns (Independent Member)  
Mr G Llewellyn (Independent Member)  
Mr P Smith (Independent Member)  
Mr R Scaiff (Parish Representative)  
Mr G Sharman (Parish Representative)  
Mr M Westwell (Parish Representative)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Busher and Davies

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1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Hoare and Rees.

2. **MINUTES**

The City Secretary and Solicitor reported that the appendix to the minutes of the previous meeting (relating to the Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy) should have contained track changes, to show the amendments agreed by this Committee alongside the original wording. However, those changes had been inadvertently 'accepted' into the document, meaning that the amendments were no longer highlighted and some original wording had been deleted. Therefore, it was agreed that the correct version would be sent to the Committee as soon as possible after this meeting.

It was noted that a revised version of the Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy was being prepared (taking account of points made by this Committee) and would be submitted to Principal Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 6 February 2006 be approved and adopted.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

4. **MONITORING OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS BY INDEPENDENT MEMBERS AND PARISH REPRESENTATIVES**

(Report ST51 refers)

The Committee considered a number of observations and recommendations made by the Independent Members and Parish Representatives, who had monitored the proceedings at recent meetings of Cabinet, Principal Scrutiny Committee and the Planning Development Control Committee, to assess both the adherence to agreed protocols and the general administration of meetings.

Whilst it was noted that there appeared a good level of overall satisfaction with meeting procedures, a number of points had been raised and these were discussed in detail by Members. The majority of the points raised related to issues arising at the Planning Development Control Committee, which was perhaps not surprising, having regard to the often lengthy and contentious matters dealt with, together with the high level of public participation at meetings.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillors Busher and Davies (as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the Planning Development Control Committee) addressed the meeting. They explained that the implementation of the Planning Improvement Plan had already tackled a number of issues regarding the management of meetings, but they would feed into the current review of that Plan the points made in the above report. In particular, the comments relating to the clear identification of Members and officers when addressing meetings were noted, as was the need for Members to be reminded to declare any interest both at the beginning of the meeting and again when the agenda item arose.

During discussion, it was agreed that no request should be made for the Chairman of the Planning Development Control Committee to provide a full summing-up of each item before a vote was taken. Whilst Members recognised that it could be useful in certain circumstances, there was also a need to exercise caution, to avoid any public perception of bias in how that summary was expressed. Therefore, it should be left to the discretion of the Chairman. With regard to the observation that it would improve public understanding if the Chairman clearly indicated when the meeting was moving from the debate phase to taking the final decision, this was accepted as good practice.

With regard to the system of dealing first with those planning applications on which there was public participation, and limiting that participation to three minutes per speaker, it was considered that, on balance, the current practices should continue.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Independent Members and Parish Representatives be thanked for undertaking the monitoring work.

2. That, subject to the above, the recommended responses arising out of the comments be agreed and the City Secretary and Solicitor be requested to pursue these matters accordingly, in particular that:

- (a) members of the Planning Development Control Committee be reminded to declare an interest (and give a brief explanation of the nature of that interest) when the item arises on the agenda, in addition to the Committee Administrator announcing that interest at the start of the meeting
- (b) during committee meetings, both members and officers should be referred to by surnames and/or job titles to aid public undertaking about who is speaking and their role at the meeting
- (c) the wearing of name badges by members and officers at meetings of Planning Development Control Committee and Licensing & Regulation Committee be commended.

3. That the appropriate points made in respect of the Planning Development Control Committee be incorporated into the specific training session held for committee members, which takes place at the beginning of each Municipal Year.

4. That the specific suggestions for improvements made by the Independent Members and Parish Representatives be drawn to the attention of all group leaders, in the context of the general conclusion that the committee structure is working well.

5. **REVIEW OF THE YEAR**  
(Report ST54 refers)

Members discussed the various issues raised in the Report and noted the areas of work which were proposed for the Committee during 2006/07.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the future work programme for the Standards Committee, as set out in paragraph 4 of the above Report, be approved.
- 2. That it be noted that the Principal Scrutiny Committee will be considering, during the summer of 2006, whether or not to establish a separate Audit Committee.
- 3. That the Internal Audit report regarding the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements be submitted to this Committee for consideration in due course.

The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm and concluded at 8.10 pm.

Chairman