

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

7 April 2008

Attendance:

Mr P Smith (Independent Member - Chairman)
Ms M McCormack (Chairman for the meeting) (P)

Councillors:

Barratt (P)
Berry (P)
Chamberlain (P)

Lipscomb (P)
Nelmes (P)
Read

Independent Members and Parish Representatives in attendance

Ms L Banister (Parish Representative)
Ms J Collins (Independent Member)
Mr M Evans (Parish Representative)
Mr J Harris (Parish Representative)
Ms S Peach (Independent Member)

1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING**

RESOLVED:

That in the absence of the Chairman (Mr P Smith), Ms McCormack be appointed as Chairman for the meeting.

2. **WELCOME TO NEW PARISH REPRESENTATIVES**

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr Michael Evans and Mr John Harris, who had been appointed by the Council on 21 February 2008, to serve on the Committee as Parish Representatives until 30 April 2009.

3. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P Smith (Independent Member and Chairman) and Mr M Westwell (Parish Representative).

4. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 4 February 2008, be approved and adopted.

5. **INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY (IM&T) SECURITY AND CONDUCT POLICY**

(Report ST65 refers)

Members noted that the Personnel Committee, at its meeting held on 3 March 2008, had considered the existing policy and requested the officers to make a number of amendments, which were shown as track changes in the appendix to the above report.

The Head of IM&T explained that the main reason for the review was to ensure that the Council's IT security policy conformed with the practices being introduced by Government Direct, to improve secure communication between all public bodies. The City Council had been audited and found to be in a more advanced position than many other local authorities, but there was still a need to reinforce and update existing procedures in the light of current guidance. She confirmed that she had written to Government Direct seeking clarification about a number of its latest proposals, which may adversely impact on the way in which both Members and officers worked, without some flexibility being provided within the new system. This aspect would be kept under review.

With regard to hoax e mails, it was agreed that the suggestion to e-mail these directly to a 'Blacklist' address be considered for the future.

The Committee considered the revised policy in detail and made a number of further amendments as set out below.

RECOMMENDED:

1. THAT THE REVISED IM&T SECURITY AND CONDUCT POLICY (ATTACHED AS APPENDIX A TO THE REPORT) BE APPROVED AS A LOCAL PROTOCOL IN PART 5 (CODES AND PROTOCOLS) OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION, SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING AMENDMENTS:-

(A) WHEREVER THE PHRASE 'MOBILE OR NOMADIC WORKER' OCCURRED IN THE POLICY, THE WORDS 'OR NOMADIC' BE DELETED.

(B) THAT TO CLARIFY SECTION 12 (HOAXES), THE WORDING IN PARAGRAPHS 12.2 AND 12.4 BE SWAPPED.

(C) THAT IN APPENDIX B, PARA. 6, THE WORD 'BEEN' BE INSERTED AFTER 'NOT'.

2. THAT THE HEAD OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY BE GIVEN DELEGATED AUTHORITY, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (GOVERNANCE) AND THE HEAD OF ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, TO UNDERTAKE MINOR UP-DATING TO THE IM&T SECURITY AND CONDUCT POLICY.

6. **MONITORING OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS BY INDEPENDENT MEMBERS AND PARISH REPRESENTATIVES – RESULTS**

(Report ST66 refers)

During discussion, attention was drawn to the poor acoustics in the Conference Chamber and, in particular, how difficult it was to hear Cabinet Members when they stood to speak and therefore moved away from the table microphones. The Corporate Director (Governance) reminded the meeting of the experimental use of the King Alfred Hall for Council meetings, which Members had rejected. Attempts would be made to improve the sound levels in the Conference Chamber, but the lecture theatre layout meant that it would never be an ideal location for Council meetings.

There was strong criticism about those Members who indulged in side conversations and moved about the meeting room during debates, which observers found very discourteous and distracting. It was agreed that the control of this behaviour was the responsibility of Chairmen and that they should be reminded of their role in this respect, together with the offer of refresher chairmanship training if appropriate.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Independent Members and Parish Representatives be thanked for undertaking the monitoring of committee meetings, to ascertain the level of compliance with the Code of Conduct and other guidance.

2. That the monitoring findings and, in particular, the points made above about Council meeting acoustics, chairmanship training and the need to firmly control side conversations and other activity which distracts from the main discussion, be drawn to the attention of the Group Leaders and all Chairmen.

7. **STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND - BULLETIN 37**

(Report ST67 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the content of Bulletin 37 from the Standards Board for England be received and noted.

8. **PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION – ARTICLE 9 (THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE)**

(Report ST68 refers)

During discussion, it was accepted that continuing to appoint a City Councillor as Vice Chairman was sensible, having regard to the need for one Councillor to be clearly responsible for presenting any Recommended Minutes from the Committee to full Council.

However, it was suggested that there should also be an Independent Member Standing Deputy Chairman, because in the absence of the Chairman, that person would be required under the new regulations to chair the meeting, and having someone appointed in advance would enable him/her to be briefed beforehand by officers. It was agreed to discuss this suggestion further at the first meeting of the Committee in the new Municipal Year.

It was also agreed that all Independent Members be offered chairmanship training, both in the context of the above discussion and because, under the new Standards Board filtering system, it was more likely that they would be called upon in the future to chair sub committee meetings.

RECOMMENDED:

THAT THE PROPOSED ALTERATIONS TO ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONSTITUTION RELATING TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE, AS SHOWN WITH TRACK CHANGES IN APPENDIX 1 TO THE ABOVE REPORT, BE APPROVED SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING FURTHER AMENDMENTS:-

(A) THAT IN PARA. 9.02 THE OPENING SENTENCE BE AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:-

'THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE WILL COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING MINIMUM LEGAL REQUIREMENTS, BUT THE ACTUAL SIZE OF THE COMMITTEE SHALL BE AS THE COUNCIL MAY DETERMINE FROM TIME TO TIME:-'

(B) THAT IN THE HEADING OF PARA. 9.06 THE WORD 'ROLL' BE AMENDED TO 'ROLE.'

The meeting commenced at 6.15pm and concluded at 8pm

Chairman