

Town Hall  
Worthing

When telephoning please contact Stevie Field ext. 1008  
email: [stevie.field@worthing.gov.uk](mailto:stevie.field@worthing.gov.uk)

Dear Councillor

**Standards Committee**

A meeting of the Standards Committee will be held in the Committee Suite, **at 6 pm on Monday 8 September 2008**, to consider the business set out in the following Agenda.

Yours sincerely



Chief Executive

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

*Independent Members – having full voting rights*

**Jane Stirzaker-Evans (Chairman), Dr. David Wiggins and John Evans**

*Councillors*

**Michael Donin, Mary Harding, Heather Mercer, Keith Sunderland, Steve Waight and Tom Wye**

*Substitute Members*

**Councillors Ann Barlow, James Doyle, Elizabeth Sparkes and Hazel Thorpe**

## **A G E N D A**

### 1. **Minutes**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 9 June 2008.

*(Copy attached. These minutes were approved by Council at its meeting on 24 June 2008)*

### 2. **Public Question Time**

To receive any questions from members of the public.

*(Note: Public Question Time will operate for up to 15 minutes).*

### 3. **Declarations of Interest**

Members and Officers are invited to make any declarations of personal and/or prejudicial interest they may have in relation to items on this agenda. The declaration should refer to the nature of the interest as well as its existence.

Members and officers may seek advice upon any relevant interest from a legal officer prior to the meeting.

### 4. **Additional Publicity for the New Role of the Standards Committee**

The Committee is updated on the publicity to date on the new role for the Standards Committee and is invited to consider what, if any, additional publicity should be undertaken to inform the public of the new role of the Standards Committee.

*(Report attached.)*

### 5. **Training – Update and Proposals**

The Committee is invited to consider additional training requirements.

*(Report attached.)*

### 6. **Selection Process for Assessment and Review Sub-Committees**

The Committee is invited to consider the development of an open and transparent method of selecting members of the Standards Committee to sit on Assessment and Review Sub-Committees.

*(Report attached.)*

7. **Progress on Equality and Diversity Issues**

The Committee is invited to note the content of this report.

*(Report attached.)*

8 **Equality Monitoring – Complaints Form**

The Committee is invited to consider guidance from the Standards Board for England in relation to equalities monitoring on the complaints form relating to member conduct.

*(Report attached.)*

9. **Code of Corporate Governance**

Following the resolution of the Council at its meeting on 22 July 2008, the Committee is invited to comment on the Code of Corporate Governance.

*(Report attached.)*

10. **Recognising High Standards at the 2009 LGC Awards**

The Committee is invited to consider whether or not Worthing Borough Council should submit an entry for the Local Government Chronicle under the category 'Standards and Ethics'.

*(Report attached.)*

11. **Monitoring Report**

The Committee is invited to consider information in respect of complaints received by the Monitoring Officer.

*(Report attached.)*

12. **Role of Standards Committee in Corporate Governance**

The Committee is invited to agree representations to be made by the Chairman of the Committee to the Development and Scrutiny Committee on Thursday 11 September 2008.

*(Report attached.)*

13. **Standards Board for England Guidance – The Role and Make-up of the Standards Committee**

The Committee is invited to consider the guidance from the Standards Board and make recommendations to Full Council.

*(Report attached.)*

## **STANDING ITEMS**

14. **Action Plan**

To note progress being made with the Standards Committee's Action Plan.

*(Updated Action Plan attached.)*

15. **Dispensations in respect of Members' Interests**

To consider any requests for dispensation received.

16. **Independent Members' Forum**

To note any reports from members.

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**8 September 2008  
at 6.00 p.m.**

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Present: Jane Stirzaker-Evans (Chairman);  
John Evans

Councillors Michael Donin, Mary Harding, Heather Mercer, Keith Sunderland, Steve Waight and Tom Wye

*Also present: Strategic Director (Andrew Gardiner), Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Democratic Services Manager and Equalities and Diversity Officer*

*Apologies for Absence: David Wiggins*

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### **1. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 June 2008 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to an amendment to paragraph 9 to indicate that all 3 independent members attended the Forum.

### **2. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

### **4. ADDITIONAL PUBLICITY FOR THE NEW ROLE OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer submitted a report updating the Committee on publicity to date on the new role of the Standards Committee.

The Committee was invited to consider what, if any, additional publicity should be undertaken to inform the public of the new role and a number of suggested options were set out in paragraph 2.5 of the report.

Some of these options would have a cost attached and the Committee was advised that, as there was currently no budgetary provision for this purpose, it would be necessary to seek Cabinet approval of a supplementary estimate should the decision be made to proceed.

The Committee agreed that it would not be appropriate to seek additional funding and that publicity should be by way of the “no-cost” options set out in the report, to include the use of VIBE, the local media and existing networks such as the LSP and the voluntary sector.

It was also suggested that the Council approach West Sussex County Council with a view to using their newspaper for publicity.

**RESOLVED**, that the new role of the Standards Committee be publicised by way of the “no-cost” options identified in the Committee report and referred to above.

## **5. TRAINING – UPDATE AND PROPOSALS**

The Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer reported that training sessions on the local assessment and review of complaints had been held for Members of Worthing and Adur Standards Committees. A further session was being arranged for those Standards Members who had been unable to attend.

He suggested that future training sessions be arranged for all non-Standards Committee Members of both Councils on the new role of the Standards Committee and the Code of Conduct. The latter was particularly important as evidence of training on the Code of Conduct was an Audit Commission key line of enquiry.

**RESOLVED**, that the Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer arrange training for all non-Standards Committee Members of both Councils on the role of the Standards Committee and the Code of Conduct, with sessions to be held during the period to 31 December 2008.

## **6. SELECTION PROCESS FOR ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEES**

The Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer submitted a report inviting the Committee to consider the development of an open and transparent method of selecting members of the Committee to sit on Assessment and Review Sub-Committees.

**RESOLVED**, that the selection of members for Assessment and Review Sub-Committees be undertaken as follows:-

- (a) that a list, in three parts, be established in alphabetical order for the Conservative Party members, Liberal Democratic members and independent members;

- (b) that the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, select from each list the next member in order, progressing through the list from meeting to meeting;
- (c) that if a member who is proposed is unable to sit, then the next member on that part of the list shall be selected;
- (d) that if no member in one part of either the Conservative Party or Liberal Democratic Party of the list can be identified then the next member in the Independent list shall be identified. If it is not possible to select, in those circumstances, from the independent members, then a second member will be selected from the other party list.

## **7. PROGRESS ON EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

The Executive Head of Corporate Strategy submitted a report on progress in relation to equality and diversity work between January 2006 and March 2008.

The Committee was concerned to note that, to date, only 44.4% of staff and 45% of Members had attended equality and diversity training and agreed that a commitment at the highest level was needed and that momentum must be maintained.

### **RESOLVED,**

- (1) that the report be noted;
- (2) that the Equality and Diversity Officer be requested to prepare a further report for the Committee's January 2009 meeting on a joint approach and Action Plan, with delivery dates, to address equality and diversity issues, including details of the National Statement of Purpose. The report also to be considered by the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Joint Strategic Committee;
- (3) that a recommendation be submitted to the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service, that 90% of staff should have received training on equalities and human rights by 31 December 2009;
- (4) that Council be recommended to agree that all Members should have received training on equalities and human rights by 30 June 2009.

## **8. EQUALITY MONITORING – COMPLAINTS FORM**

At its meeting on 9 June 2008 the Committee had considered a proposed complaints form relating to Member conduct and had requested the Monitoring Officer to seek clarification from the Standards Board as to the purpose of the section of the form relating to equalities monitoring.

The Monitoring Officer had spoken with the Legal Section of the Standards Board and had been advised that the Board did not propose any particular

questions to be asked. No advice had been given as to how the information was to be used.

In the circumstances, it was recommended that the matter of what should be included on the form be referred to the Equalities and Diversity Working Group.

**RESOLVED**, that the matter be referred to the Equalities and Diversity Working Group.

**9. CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

As agreed by Council at its meeting on 22 July 2008, the Committee was invited to comment on the Code of Corporate Governance. In addition, at a later stage on the agenda, the Committee was asked to comment on a written submission by the Chairman on the Code which she was due to present to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11 September (see item 12 below).

**RESOLVED**, that the Code of Corporate Governance be endorsed, subject to the adoption by Council of any recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**10. RECOGNISING HIGH STANDARDS AT THE 2009 LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHRONICLE (LGC) AWARDS 2009**

The Committee was invited to consider whether or not the Council should submit an entry for the LGC 2009 Awards under the category "Standards and Ethics".

**RESOLVED**, that no submission be made for 2009 but the Officers be requested to consider the collection of the necessary evidence and data to submit an application in 2010.

**11. MONITORING REPORT**

The Monitoring Officer reported that he had received no complaints during the quarter ended 30 June 2008.

**RESOLVED**, that the report be noted.

**12. ROLE OF STANDARDS IN CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

The Committee was invited to consider and comment upon a written submission by the Chairman to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the role of Standards Committee in Corporate Governance. Following detailed discussion it was,

**RESOLVED**, that the Chairman's submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be endorsed, subject to minor amendment.

The agreed recommendations to reads as follows:-

1. That the Standards Committee's Terms of reference be amended to include the matters proposed in paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 of the submission;
2. That the Standards Committee be recognised as a 'source of assurance' in relation to the Annual Governance Statement;
3. That consideration be given to establishing separate reference groups for Worthing and Adur;
4. That Officers be asked to assess the various ethical toolkits offered by IDEA and to report further on their use to assess the current Governance issues in Worthing;
5. That the Standards Committee lead role on ethical governance issues be recognised in undertaking the critical review of the Annual Governance Statement and incorporated within its terms of reference.

### 13. **THE ROLE AND MAKE-UP OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer submitted a report outlining guidance from the Standards Board relating to the role and make-up of Standards Committees.

A copy of the Guidance was tabled at the meeting.

In the light of the Guidance the Committee

#### **RESOLVED,**

1. That the Monitoring Officer provide a quarterly report on complaints received and their progress.
2. That all members of the Council receive training on the Code of Conduct in their first two months in office and in every second year thereafter.
3. That the Committee request each member of the Council, on an annual basis, to complete a questionnaire in relation to the Code of Conduct.
4. That the Committee recommend to the General Purposes Committee that the Vice-Chair of Standards be an independent member.
5. That the Committee recommend to the General Purposes Committee that independent members of the Standards Committee should be appointed for four years and the terms of office of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman be extended to four years.

6. That the Committee recommend to the General Purposes Committee that an independent member may be re-appointed on one occasion and should not serve for a total of more than eight years.
7. That the Committee recommend to the General Purposes Committee that the current Chair of Standards Committee term of office be extended to four years and that subsequent Chairs should be elected at the beginning of the municipal year by the Council for a four year term.
8. That the Committee recommend to the General Purposes Committee that in line with Standards Board guidance there should be no substitutes at Standards Committee.

**14. ACTION PLAN**

The Committee considered its Action Plan for 2008/09 which had been amended at the previous meeting to include item 8 – *“to consider equalities monitoring on complaints”* and item 9 – *“report on research from Human Resources on current Dignity at Work Policy (anti-bullying)”*.

The Monitoring Officer suggested that, in future, the Action Plan should contain four columns, showing the item number, the action agreed, the timescale and notes and progress.

**RESOLVED,**

- (1) that the amended format of the action plan be noted and endorsed;
- (2) that the additional items 8 and 9 be agreed;
- (3) that reports on items 8 and 9 be submitted to the Committee at its January 2009 and November 2008 meetings respectively.

**15. DISPENSATIONS IN RESPECT OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

None.

**16. INDEPENDENT MEMBERS' FORUM**

No reports received.

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The meeting ended at 8.55 p.m.