
STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2011

Present:

Members of the Council

Councillors Burke, Drake, Matthews (Mayor), Noon, Osmond (Items 9 and 10 only) and Parnell

Independent Members

Mr Brian Hooper (Chair), Mr David Blake, Mrs Elizabeth Hale and Mr Geoff Wilkinson

Apologies

Councillor Turner

5. **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT CHAIR**

RESOLVED that Mr Brian Hooper be elected Independent Chair of the Committee for the Municipal Year 2011/2012.

6. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Governance Committee held on 27th June, 2011 be approved and signed as a correct record. (Copy of Minutes circulated with agenda and appended to the signed Minutes).

7. **ANNUAL REPORT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS 2010-11**

The Committee received and noted the report of the Director of Corporate Services summarising the performance and issues arising out of the Annual Letter for 2010-11 (year ending 31 March 2011) from the Commission for Local Administration in England (Ombudsman). (Copy of the report circulated with the agenda and appended to the signed minutes).

The Committee noted that following the introduction of the significant changes in the way the Ombudsman investigates complaints against Council's in 2008/09, further changes in reporting methods had been made in 2011 which had presented difficulties for the accurate judgement of performance in some areas. However, it was also noted that it had been possible for the report to provide assurance about specific trends despite these changes and that overall, the number of complaints continued to remain low and that Southampton performed well in comparison to its Audit Commission comparator group in the South.

8. **CORPORATE COMPLAINTS**

The Committee received and noted the report of the Head of Corporate Policy and Performance summarising performance and issues arising out of complaints made by

the public via the Corporate Complaint's Procedure during 2010/11. (Copy of the report circulated with the agenda and appended to the signed minutes).

It was noted that the distribution of complaints was not spread evenly across all divisions as they concentrated towards customer facing services and that overall the number of complaints dealt with in 2010/11 had seen a small decrease.

The Committee was informed that the Corporate Complaints procedure was not a statutory requirement although failure to have a Corporate Complaints procedure in place would lead to an adverse report from the Local Government Ombudsman) and that the systems and processes that individual councils had in place were based on LGO guidance, tailored to individual council structures and services. Thus comparison between authorities was difficult.

The Committee also noted that work would be undertaken during 2011/12 to assess whether access to the complaints system would be enhanced by the use of social networking e.g. Twitter, Facebook, and that the outcome of this assessment and any subsequent action would be included in next year's Annual Report to the Committee.

9. **ANNUAL REPORT ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LEARNING/ HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS 2010-11**

The Committee received and noted the report of the Customer Care and Quality Manager detailing an overview and analysis of the comments, concerns, compliments, and enquiries for Adult Social Care and Children's Services and Learning. (Copy of the report circulated with the agenda and appended to the signed minutes).

The Committee noted that a separate process was followed within the Children's Services and Learning Directorate and the Health and Adult Social Directorate, largely as a result of the statutory complaints procedure which applies in these areas and at present this statutory complaints and comments system is separate from the corporate complaints process and thus reported separately.

The Committee was informed that changes in the structure of both directorates had led to some problems and delays in full analysis of these complaints and that a further report would be submitted to a later meeting.

RESOLVED that a further report be submitted to a later meeting of the Committee.

10. **MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME**

The Committee considered the report of the Acting Head of Legal and Democratic Services concerning the Independent Remuneration Panel recommendations following its review of the Members' Allowance Scheme. (Copy of the report circulated with the agenda and appended to the signed minutes).

RESOLVED that the following comment on the proposals be noted:-

The Standards and Governance Committee expressed their concern that some of the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel could

effectively discourage many people from becoming councillors, and thus lead to a reduction in the Council's current broad base of membership.

11. **LOCALISM BILL - UPDATE**

The Committee considered the report of the Report of the Acting Head of Legal and Democratic Services regarding the Localism Bill in relation to the new Standards regime and revised Members' Code of Conduct. (Copy of the report circulated with the agenda and appended to the signed minutes).

RESOLVED that the Acting Head of Legal and Democratic Services discuss with the Group Leaders the options in relation to the replacement of the current Members' Code of Conduct and systems to investigate any complaints made that the Code has been breached and bring a further report to this committee in due course.