

London Borough of Islington
Standards Committee – 11th January 2006

Non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held at the Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 11th January 2006

Present: Father Jim Kennedy, John Gilbert and Jo Michie
Councillors Derek Sawyer and Terry Stacy

Father Jim Kennedy in the Chair

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)

None.

2. DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)

None.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (Item 3)

None.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th October 2005 be confirmed and the Chair authorised to sign them.

5. SUMMARY REPORT ON THE ETHICAL GOVERNANCE SURVEY (Item 5)
RESOLVED:

(1) That the report and its results be welcomed.

(2) That the action plan arising from the recommendations be reported back to the Committee in March.

(3) That the positive results from the survey be publicised to further highlight the work of the Standards Committee.

(4) A report be submitted to the March meeting of the Committee on the proposals for amending the Code of Conduct for Members.

6. CCTV (Item 6)

RESOLVED:

(1) That when the Executive consider the CCTV Scrutiny Review Report at their meeting in March 2006, they be requested to take on board this Committee's view that all Council services and our contractors should follow a Code of Practice for CCTV which is consistent with that used by Street Management.

(2) Gary Griffiths circulate members of the Committee with an electronic copy of the current Code of Practice for CCTV.

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7. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF PROCUREMENT (Item 7)

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Noted that an improvement plan was being put in place to implement the findings of the Best Value Review.

8. ETHICS AND STANDARDS INDICATORS (Item 8)

RESOLVED:

(1) That the Standards and Ethics Indicators be noted.

(2) That the Committee would consider the Council's formal response to the Adjudication Panel for England's recommendations in relation to the recruitment process for the appointment of the Chief Executive at their March meeting.

In relation to the objections to the Council's Accounts it was noted that the District Auditor had written to the objector stating that as his predecessor had now determined the objection to the 2001/02 and 2002/03 accounts, he was now able to commence consideration of the same objection in relation to the 2003/04 accounts.

In relation to referrals to and investigations undertaken by the Standards Board, the Monitoring Officer reported that the Adjudication Panel for England had issued their formal decision on the case of Councillors Dunn, Fox, Hitchins, Vaja and Valery and had cleared them of all charges.

A copy of the 159 pages of findings of fact was now available on the Adjudication Panel's website.

The Monitoring Officer reported that since the report on Standards and Ethics Indicators was drafted, she had received notice from the Standards Board that they had received a complaint against Councillor Hitchins for failing to declare a personal interest at an Area Committee in relation to the Finsbury Park Area Action Plan. The Board had advised that the allegation should not be investigated.

9. ANY URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair agreed to consider the following two updates from Internal Audit on items requested at the October meeting.

(i) Property Disposals

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Services Committee be advised that this Committee were concerned with the lack of pace that the recommendations from Internal Audit in respect of Property Disposals were being dealt with.

The Chief Internal Auditor reported that a draft report had now been issued in respect of this matter and that the control rating had moved up from none to limited assurance. An action plan had been produced by officers which took on board Audit's recommendations.

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(ii) Corporate Governance Survey (laid round item)

The Chief Internal Auditor reported that there was a 40% return rate from senior managers on the survey on internal financial controls within the Council.

The weak areas highlighted in para. 4.5 of the report were being actioned. The Monitoring Officer also suggested money laundering could be a related issue which could be added to the issues to be addressed.

(iii) Annual Assembly of Standards Committees, Birmingham - 16-17th October 2006

The Head of Democratic Services would check with the Standards Board if it was possible to send a different person to each of the two days or just book for one of the days.

(iv) Independent Members Forum for London

The Chair reported back that he had hosted and organised the first meeting of the London Independent Members Forum to which eight people had attended, with another four giving apologies for the evening.

The evening had been a useful start in sharing ideas and good practice and it was agreed that agendas would be shared amongst members to gain an insight into how other Committees operated.

The Chair welcomed any members of the Committee to attend future meetings, dates of which would be circulated in due course.

10. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee would be held on 30th March 2006 at 7.00pm.

The meeting ended at 8.10pm.

CHAIR

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