

PRESENT: MR J KRAWIEC (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors D R Dickinson, N I Jackson, Mrs M J Overton and R Sellars

Mr J A Hanna

Also in attendance: Councillor B Young, David O'Connor, Executive Director for Performance and Governance and Rachel Wilson, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor H R Johnson and, Mr R A Daff, and Mrs C A Lloyd.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 APRIL 2011

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April, 2011 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chairman's Announcements to report. However, it was noted that the Localism Act would come into effect in July 2012, and so the position of the County Council would change from 30 June 2012.

5. OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS/STATEMENTS/UPDATES

There were no other announcements/statements/updates to report.

6. LOCALISM ACT 2011 – IMPACT ON STANDARDS AND DISCUSSION ON FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor B Young, Chairman of the Audit Committee, was welcomed to the meeting and invited to take part in the discussion.

Consideration was given to a report which summarised the new arrangements in the Localism Act 2011 which would come into force in July 2012. The Committee was invited to discuss some of the options for implementing the new arrangements.

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE
20 FEBRUARY 2012**

The report set out some of the aspects of the Act which local authorities must comply with, including the following:

- Promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the authority;
- Adopt a code complying with the following principles: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership;
- Make provision in the code for registration in its register, and disclosure, of pecuniary interests and interests other than pecuniary interests – what was disclosable would be defined by the registration;
- Make the register available including publication on the website – it would be a requirement to have the register available on the website in the future;
- Have in place arrangements under which written allegations would be investigated, and arrangements under which decisions on allegations would be made;
- Appoint at least one independent person whose views were to be sought, and taken into account, by the authority before it made its decision on an allegation that it had decided to investigate and who could be contacted by a Member subject to an allegation to discuss it – they would not be able to have an input in the decision making as this could put the independent person in a difficult position. This could not be a member of the Authority's Standards Committee, but it could be someone who had served on the Standards Committee of another authority, this would be one way to retain the knowledge of the independent members;
- The monitoring officer of a relevant authority must establish and maintain a register of interests of members and co-opted members of the authority – there would be a provision for sensitive interests to be disclosed to the monitoring officer.

The Committee had a detailed discussion in relation to how to implement the new arrangements when they came into effect in July 2012, and were in agreement that the Authority should retain a Standards Committee in some form and there was support for it to be a sub-committee or panel of the Audit Committee, there was also the added benefit that members of the Audit Committee were required to undergo regular training.

The issues around registering and declaration of interests were also discussed and it was agreed that there was a need for clear guidance from monitoring officers on what needed to be declared.

The Committee was advised that there would be a national framework in which authorities needed to operate, but individual authorities would be free to decide what to put into their code of conduct and how to operate within that framework.

There was strong support for the need for discipline of members to come from group leaders, but what forms that should take was still to be discussed. It was also thought that there was a need for some sort of appeals process in relation to sanctions, but it would be important to have a filtering process in place for complaints.

It was suggested that the next meeting of the standards Committee should take place on Monday, 23 April 2012, and should be a joint meeting with the Audit Committee. It was thought that this date would be suitable as the latest version of the Code of Conduct would be ready by then.

RESOLVED

That comments made in relation to the potential local arrangements be noted.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2012

There was nothing further to note in relation to the Work Programme at this time.

8. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items to report.

9. ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT MEETING

It was suggested that the next meeting of the Standards Committee should be held as a joint meeting with the Audit Committee on Monday, 23 April 2012 at 10.00am,

The meeting finished at 3.30pm