

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH 21 JANUARY 2009

Members Present:

Mr S Boast (Chair), Mr O Menendez, Mr R Nesbitt, Ms. A Smith, Mr D Whiles
Councillors Lane, Miners, Murphy, Todd and Trueman
Parish Councillors Batty

Officers Present:

Helen Edwards, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer
Carol Tilley, Senior Cabinet Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mr C Evans and Ms. B Fearon.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.2 There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Meeting held 3 December 2008

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held 3 December were approved.

4. Monitoring Officers' Report

1. Actions since last meeting:

The Committee noted that its response to the government consultation in respect of the Code of Conduct had been submitted by the deadline of 24 December 2008.

2. Referrals / Complaints:

It was noted that the third quarter return for the period ending 31 December 2008 had been submitted showing that six complaints had been received during the relevant period. The Committee further noted that since the last update, there had been one referral for a determination hearing by the sub-committee.

3. **Work Programme:**

3.1 Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Checks for Elected Members:

At the last meeting, Members had agreed to recommend that CRB checks were undertaken for elected Members on the basis of a risk assessment. The Monitoring Officer advised that since that time, a complication had arisen as a result of the recommendations of the Joint Area Review of Haringey Children's Services following the 'Baby P' case. Members were informed that one of the recommendations from that review was as follows:

'whilst not a mandatory requirement, it would be good practice for the Local Authority to ensure that all elected Members have CRB checks'.

Members noted that this advice was at variance with advice previously received from the CRB which was that a blanket policy would be inappropriate. The Monitoring Officer stated that she was currently seeking clarification in this regard, and suggested that it would be unwise to refer the matter to Cabinet prior to the position being resolved. However, Members were asked to note that the CRB guidance would be likely to take precedence over the OFSTED recommendations and it would therefore be a sensible way forward for the Committee to proceed as intended in determining the contents of the risk assessment.

Members **AGREED** this approach and considered the proposed risk assessment process as set out in Appendix A of the report. During discussion, the following points were raised:

- (i) Concern regarding the level of officer resource required in developing a risk assessment approach;
- (ii) The feasibility of engaging an external provider to undertake independent risk assessments;
- (iii) The possibility of seeking comments from the CRB on the proposed model;
- (iv) Paragraphs 12 and 13 stated that a CRB check would be unlikely to be necessary for those whose roles brought them into occasional contact with vulnerable adults and / or children. It was suggested that this should be amended to reflect the Committee's view that this should apply to *unsupervised* contact;

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Agree the proposed risk assessment process for considering CRB checks for elected Members, subject to an amendment being made at paragraphs 12 and 13 of the report - to include the word '*unsupervised*' as outlined in (iv) above.
- (ii) Agree that elected Members discuss proposals with other members of their respective groups and feedback comments and views;
- (iii) Request the Monitoring Officer, on receipt of clarification from CRB/OFSTED, to prepare a report outlining the Committee's recommendation to Cabinet.

3.2 Future Work Items:

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- Meeting dates (confirmed and provisional) for the remainder of the year;
- Training events and the possibility of including a training session as part of a full Council meeting, thus avoiding the need to identify an additional date;
- The timing and content of the Committee's annual report to Council;
- Local Democracy Week and involvement of the Youth Council.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Request the Monitoring Officer to prepare a draft Annual Update report for consideration at the next meeting (18 March);
- (ii) Invite Councillor Dalton (in his capacity as a representative of the Youth Council) to attend a future meeting;
- (iii) Invite those involved in organising Local Democracy Week to attend a future meeting to discuss arrangements for the event.

3.3 Planning Committee Voting Analysis:

The Committee considered the Planning Committee Voting Analysis records in respect of the meetings held 23 September 2008 and 21 October 2008. The Committee expressed concern that the analysis relating to the meeting of 21 October was incorrect and requested that this matter be addressed. A revised version would be submitted to the next meeting.

4. Consultation on New Code of Conduct for Members and Employees – Local Authority Publicity

Following discussion at the previous meeting, the Committee considered the DCLG consultation paper, focusing particularly on questions 1 to 16 (outlined at Annex A of the document). It was suggested that elected Members should seek input from colleagues within their respective groups prior to the submission of the final response.

It was **RESOLVED** TO:

- (i) Request the Monitoring Officer to compile draft responses to questions 1 to 16 for elected Members to discuss at their respective group meetings before the end of January;
- (ii) Request the Monitoring Officer to collate the views of all parties and circulate a draft response to Committee Members for comment prior to submission of the final response on or before 12 March 2009.

5. Date of Next Meeting

5.1 Members noted the date of the next meeting: 18 March 2009.

Meeting closed at 7.55 p.m.

This page is intentionally left blank