

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 14 June 2006 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Davis, Ms Flanagan, Guest and Short

Mr P Cruden, Councillor Mrs A Gordon and Councillor B Smart

144. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED that Councillor Guest be appointed Chair for the ensuing year.

145. INDEPENDENT MEMBER

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr Peter Cruden who had recently been appointed as an independent member of the Committee.

146. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

147. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2006, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

148. MEMBERS' REGISTER OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS UNDER THE MANDATORY CODE OF CONDUCT

The Register containing details of financial and other interests, notified by individual Councillors, was made available for inspection by Members of the Committee.

149. NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE 2004/05

The Committee received a report from Finance regarding the outcome of the National Fraud Initiative 2004/05 and the timetable and key changes notified for the National Fraud Initiative 2006/07.

The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) was a national inter-organisational data matching exercise undertaken by the Audit Commission every two years as part of the statutory audit of all public bodies under its remit. The main purpose of the NFI was to track benefit fraud as well as irregularities regarding employment, social housing tenancies, occupational pensions and student loans.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE (Continued)

Under the arrangements, the Council was obliged to extract and supply data to the Audit Commission, review and, where appropriate, investigate output referred from the data matching process and to report outcome statistics to the Audit Commission.

A member of the Council's internal audit team was responsible for overseeing compliance with NFI requirements and benefit related matches were assigned to the fraud investigation team for examination.

The report contained details of the specific results regarding the Council.

With regard to the NFI 2006/07, the submission of data by the Council was due during October 2006 and the process would be completed in May 2008 with the production of the report from the Audit Commission. As part of the next NFI, an anti corruption module would be introduced which expanded the scope of data required to include the Council's creditors and associated payment histories. The Council would also have the option to include data on licensed taxi driver's and liability claims against the Council.

RESOLVED that the information contained in the report be noted with interest and that the matter be discussed further at the meeting on 17 April 2007.

150. FUTURE TRAINING FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Committee received a report from the Monitoring Officer regarding proposals for training for members of the Committee to assist them in their role.

The Standards Board for England had issued guidance as to how Standards Committees should conduct local determination of complaints and it was felt that it would assist the Committee if it became familiar with the operation of the guidance.

Various options for the training were considered and it was agreed that the most beneficial would be to hold a mock determination with breaks at key points so that Members could ask questions before progressing to the next stage. Complicated elements could be discussed before the Committee applied the guidance.

It was agreed that the training sessions should be held on Thursday 20 July 2006 at 2.00 pm in Riverside House. It was also agreed that substitute members should also be encouraged to attend.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE (Continued)

At a subsequent training session, it might be appropriate to invite members from Standards Committees of neighbouring Councils to attend.

RESOLVED that the proposals for the holding of a training seminar for the Committee be approved.

(The meeting ended at 6.40 pm)

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