

## **Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Committee**

### **Standards Committee**

27 June 2012 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30 a.m. at County Hall, Chichester.

Present:

Mr Hammett (Chairman), Mr Britton, Mr Coleman, Mrs Elson, Mr Longmore, Mr Rogers, Mr Wilkinson and Dr Wilsdon.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Acraman

### **Declaration of Interests**

1. None declared.

### **Minutes**

2. Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7 November 2011 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

### **Complaints Annual Monitoring Report**

3. The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive (copy appended to the signed minutes) which set out a summary of complaints and compliments received in 2011-12 and the learning from them.
4. The Committee noted that the number of complaints had decreased but that the number of compliments had risen, partly due to better recording. Members queried how highways issues were recorded and noted that notification of a defect was not treated as a complaint, but that complaints could arise either because action was not taken or because the customer was not kept informed of progress. It was also noted that complaints directed to local members may not be recorded unless the member concerned notified the Customer Relations Team. Dave Loveman, Customer Relations Manager, advised that the Team was working with Highways colleagues to ensure that communication with customers became more consistent and met agreed timescales.
5. A rise in the number of complaints in children's social care and a delay in response times was questioned. Mr Loveman clarified that delays in responses were being tackled through the involvement of senior managers when necessary.
6. Tony Kershaw, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, reported that the annual monitoring report would be made available to all members through the Annual Report which would be submitted to County Council on 20 July 2012. It was proposed that the report should be utilised by Select Committee business planning groups to help them plan whether any aspects of service delivery should be scrutinised.
7. The Committee considered a proposal that the early resolution process should be adopted more widely and agreed that this could lead to better outcomes for customers and hopefully a reduction in complaints.

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8. Resolved – That the report be noted and that the early resolution process be adopted in the corporate complaints procedure.

## **Standards Committee Annual Report**

9. The Committee received a draft annual report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (copy appended to the signed minutes).
10. The report was introduced by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the draft annual report was supported subject to the amendments listed below:
  - The name of the member found to be in breach of the code of conduct should be removed and the fact that the details were published should be noted.
  - Details about the recent publication of pecuniary interests and their effects should be mentioned in paragraph 5.
  - The fact that the current independent members were willing to serve as independent persons should be noted in paragraph 4.
  - Paragraph 10 on complaints monitoring should be amended to reflect that the Committee emphasised the need for the learning from complaints to be used to enhance the service delivered and that the Committee accepted that complaints handling was on the basis that it is an expression of dissatisfaction about a service. It should also recommend that Select Committee business planning groups should receive the information to help inform topics for scrutiny.
11. Resolved – That, subject to the additions and amendments listed in minute 10 above, the draft Standards Committee annual report be approved for submission to the County Council on 20 July 2012.

## **Update on the future of the Standards Regime**

12. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reported that regulations had now been published on pecuniary interests. Failure to declare a pecuniary interest would now be a criminal offence. He confirmed that the County Council had on 18 May 2012 agreed to establish a new Standards Committee, keeping the code of conduct and the enforcement scheme as similar to the current versions as was permitted, with effect from 1 July 2012. The review sub-committees were abolished in line with the Standards Committee's recommendation and fewer sanctions were now available through enforcement.
13. He advised that independent persons would have to be consulted during individual cases, both in advising the sub-committees and the member subject to the complaint. It would be possible, though, to involve independent persons more fully in the wider work of the Committee, including through training.
14. The Committee was of the view that independent persons should be invited to take a fuller part in the work of the Committee.
15. Resolved – That the independent persons be invited to take part in the wider work of the new Standards Committee, including attending meetings to provide advice and through involvement in training.

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**Date of Next Meeting**

16. The Committee noted that this would be the final meeting of the statutory Standards Committee established through the Local Government Act 2000. The Chairman and other independent members were thanked for their important contribution to the success of the Committee.

17. The Committee noted that the first meeting of the new Standards Committee will take place on 5 November 2012 at 2.15 p.m. at County Hall, Chichester.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 11.29 a.m.