

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday 5 October 2005 at 6.00 p.m.**

**at the Council House, Walsall**

### **Present**

Mr. R. Meller (Chairman)  
Mr. L. Bates (Vice-Chairman)  
Dr. K. Biscomb  
Councillor Khan  
Ms. K. McLeod  
Councillor O'Hare  
Mrs. S.F. Parsons  
Mr. R. Taylor  
Councillor Underhill

#### **175/05 Apology**

An apology for non-attendance was submitted on behalf of Councillor Bentley.

#### **176/05 Minutes**

##### **Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2005, a copy having been circulated previously to each Member of the Committee, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **177/05 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest submitted for this meeting.

#### **178/05 Late item – Local Government Ombudsman annual review 2004-2005**

The report of the Executive Director was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Reason for urgency: Members agreed to consider this matter as urgent business as the next meeting of the Committee was not until 12 January 2006 by which time the information in the report relating to the Ombudsman's annual letter to the Council for the year 2004/2005 would be outdated.

## **Resolved**

That the content of the report on the Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review 2004-2005 be noted.

### 179/05 **Fourth annual assembly of Standards Committees: 5 and 6 September 2005**

The report of the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services was submitted, together with supplementary reports by Dr. Kay Biscomb and Mrs. Sheila Parsons relating to their attendance at the assembly:-

(see annexed)

The Chairman, Dr. Kay Biscomb and Mrs. Shelia Parsons confirmed that they had attended the annual assembly on the 5 and 6 September and considered that it was a useful experience and that relevant information had been provided.

## **Resolved**

That the content of the report and the supplementary reports on the fourth annual assembly of Standards Committees held on 5 and 6 September 2005 be noted.

### 180/05 **Standards Board for England – annual review**

The report of the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services was submitted:-

(see annexed)

The Committee was advised that the Standards Board for England had produced its annual report reviewing its performance over the last 12 months. The Standards Board summarised its achieved objectives for the year 2004/2005 as:

- Clearing the backlog of 400 investigations
- Speeding up investigations, completing nearly twice as many as last year
- Halving the time taken to make decisions on whether to investigate a complaint
- Filtering out malicious, vexatious and tit for tat complaints
- Focusing on cases with the potential to damage local democracy

- Enabling successful local investigations
- Encouraging local authorities to take leadership on ethics
- Developing an ethical governance toolkit with the Audit Commission and the Improvement and Development Agency.

The Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services explained in detail the report and referred to paragraph 8 of his report and said that it was a matter of concern that only 24% of complaints submitted to the Standards Board were referred for investigation. Mr. Gill said that the high level of rejection of complaints could have a negative impact on the level of public confidence in the system.

### **Resolved**

That the content of the report be noted.

### 181/05 **Recommendations of the Standards Board for England on the Code of Conduct**

The report of the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Members were advised that the report and presentation detailed the recommendations of the Standards Board for England to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister following the consultation exercise on the Members Code of Conduct and compared the recommendations with those of the Council's Standards Committee from its special meeting in June 2005.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the content of the report be noted;
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services be requested to write to the Standards Board for England asking for detailed information on the process used by the Board when formulating the recommendations to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister following the consultation exercise on the review of the Members Code of Conduct

The meeting terminated at 7.10 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: