

STANDARDS COMMITTEE25 June 2003
(6.00pm – 6.50pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Stebbings (Chair), Dryden, Hughes, and Taylor. External Members Ms Hobbs and Dr Clark.

FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

03/s/17 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 5 March 2003 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

03/s/18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Pinnington.

03/s/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

03/s/20 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from the public.

03/s/21 ANNUAL REPORT ON PREVENTION OF FRAUD AND CORRUPTION POLICY

The Committee noted that an outcome from the Council's (pathfinder) Comprehensive Performance Assessment, was that the Fraud and Corruption Policy should be reported formally on an annual basis.

Councillor Taylor requested that the Policy be amended to reflect in para 3.7 that the Council has more stringent guidance on gifts and hospitality than that which is required by the Code of Conduct.

Subject to the agreed amendment, the Committee received and noted the report.

03/s/22 PUBLICATION OF REPORT ON COMPLAINTS HANDLING PERFORMANCE

The Chair ruled that under 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 the late item from the Head of Strategy & Partnerships on Complaints Handling should be considered despite not being made publicly available for the committee five clear days prior to the meeting. The reason was that the report had been erroneously left off the agenda.

The Chair's view was that despite only being tabled the report should be considered by the Committee as this had been the intention and had been reported as such to the Commercial &

Human Resources Scrutiny Committee which has considered the report the previous day.

In response to a question from Ms Hobbs, the officers undertook to compare the numbers of complaints received with other local authorities in the 'Family Group' and report this to the Executive Councillor for Commercial and Human Resources.

The Committee noted that a revised version of the Complaints Leaflet was in production and it included information on the Standards Board for England and Standards Committee.

In response to a question from Dr Clark, the officers agreed to make the table 'Complaints Agreed' clearer as it showed a total of 30 cases but only 17 had been resolved. The Committee also agreed that before it went to print, the 5 cases awaiting comments under Environment and Planning should be chased up.

03/s/23 **CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICY - ANNUAL REPORT**

In response to comments from the Committee, the Director of Central Services undertook to ensure that, when the Policy was next revised, para 5.5.4 to refer to the Independent Complaints Officer rather than Internal Ombudsman; on 4.3 last bullet point that the term 'is damaging to the environment' be put in context; and that in the penultimate bullet point to include 'staff' as well as 'clients'.

03/s/24 **REFERRAL TO STANDARDS COMMITTEES OF ALLEGED BREACHES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Head of Legal & Democratic Services advised the Committee that the Standards Board for England was yet to issue Guidance on the Regulations, which was expected within the next few weeks.

Resolved -

That the Monitoring Officer report further on a procedure for making decisions on referred complaints once the Guidance from the Standards Board has been received.

03/s/25 **DRAFT PROTOCOL FOR PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The Committee noted that the draft Protocol would hopefully be reported to the October meeting.

The meeting ended at 6.50pm.

Chair