

STANDARDS COMMITTEE7 June 2006
(6.00pm – 6.55pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Hymans, Mc Pherson, C Rosenstiel, Stebbings, Taylor (Chair).
External Members: Dr Clark, Mr Dasgupta
Also present – External Member (alternates) Mrs English and Mr Williams

FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**06/s/09 WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair welcomed the new External Members (Mr Dasgupta, Mrs English, Mr Williams and Mr Barrett) to their first meeting.

06/s/10 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

Cllr Hymans nominated and Councillor C Rosenstiel seconded the nomination of Dr Clark. There being no other nominations, Dr Clark was elected Vice Chair for the 2006/07 Municipal Year.

06/s/11 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

06/s/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Dryden and Mr Barrett (reserve External Member).

06s/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

06/s/14 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No members of the public were present.

06/s/15 PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT COUNCIL'S COMPLAINT HANDLING PERFORMANCE 2005/06

Both the Senior Strategy Officer and Performance Analyst introduced the report.

Members of the Committee discussed the response target to complaints of 10 working days (either by acknowledgement or reply). Mr Dasgupta asked if there was any benchmarking of response times to complaints. The officers commented that this was looked at two years ago and it was found that local authorities recorded complaints in different ways and within different timescales, so benchmarking was not possible. However, a reply or acknowledgement within 10 working days was still considered appropriate as the Committee noted any reduction in the target may have an impact on resources (for example, more acknowledgement letters may need to be sent out).

Mr Williams commented from his experience of work within the Law Society, that a response to a complaint within 10 working days was a good target.

In response to a request from the Chair, the officers would see if information on those complaints answered quicker than 10 working days was easily available. Members of the Committee also thought that the officers should look at whether an acknowledgement within 10 working days needed to be reviewed bearing in mind the variety of methods used to send a complaint.

Action by: Performance Analyst, Strategy & Partnerships

The Committee noted that these comments would be passed on to the Executive Councillor for Customer Services & Resources for consideration on 4 July.

**06/s/16 ANNUAL REPORT ON PREVENTION OF FRAUD AND CORRUPTION
POLICY**

The Council's Principal Auditor introduced the report. Members of the Committee asked for further information about case 2 in para 2.5 and noted that it was not a straightforward matter.

In response to a question from Mr Williams on the risk management assessment of casework undertaken by the Fraud Prevention Team, the Principal Auditor would report back on when it was last reviewed and whether the Committee could receive a briefing or review it.

The Committee was pleased to note the Council's successful record of prosecutions and that this be passed on to the Fraud Prevention Team.

06/s/17 EXTERNAL MEMBER TRAINING

During a discussion on what training was available, Mr Dasgupta requested that he should have the opportunity to visit and talk to officers (this should be available to all the External Members). The External Members appreciated the training on Code of Conduct issues provided by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services on 22 May (the session had been set up for new members of the Council). Details of the Corporate Induction and the Member Development Programme were circulated.

The External Members were advised that they could attend any meeting of the Council and the committee manager would provide them with the link to the Council's agenda/reports page on the website. Ms Louise Hobbs, former Vice Chair was also available for advice as well as Dr Clark.

The External Members were encouraged to contact either the Head of Legal & Democratic Services or the committee manager with any potential training they identify which would be of use for their role.

The meeting closed at 6.55pm

Chair