

## STANDARDS & ETHICS COMMITTEE

25 JULY 2006

Present: The Most Reverend Dr Barry Morgan (Archbishop of Wales/Bishop of Llandaff) (Chairperson),  
David Hughes, Elaine Moore and Akmal Hanuk

Community Councillor David Suthers

County Councillors Griffiths, James and Owens

Observers: Anne Morgan, Maureen Hedley-Clarke and Deirdre Jones

Also: Kate Berry (Monitoring Officer), Kumi Ariyadasa, Legal Services and Val Davies, Committee Services

Apology: Paul Stockton

### S59 : WELCOME

The Chairperson introduced and welcomed Dr Deirdre Jones to the meeting as an observer. Dr Jones had been appointed as an independent member to take up a position on the new Committee.

### S60 : MINUTES

Following a discussion on the content of the minutes, the minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

### S61 : ETHICAL STANDARDS AUDIT RESPONSES

The Committee at its meeting on 12 January 2006 agreed to conduct an ethical standards audit for the Authority. At its meeting on 14 March 2006 the Monitoring Officer was authorised to arrange for a desktop review of policies and processes, and a survey of the Council's elected Members, employees, partner organisations and the public, in accordance with the recommendations of the report and the Committee's comments.

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report, which set out the results of the ethical standards audit that had been undertaken on behalf of the Committee.

The detailed findings of the consultation with Members of the Council, Officers, the public and stakeholders was set out in appendix 2 to the report, including the response rates of the questionnaire that had been circulated. The Committee noted that a high level of response had been received from staff, partner organisations and the public but there had been a poor response from Members of the Council. The Committee were of the opinion that it would be beneficial to re-circulate the questionnaire to Members of the Council, as the response would provide useful information for future training requirements.

The Committee noted that corporate governance matters are to be included as a separate programme within the Council's Programme Management Board, and that the results of the Ethical Audit would be fed into this programme.

The Committee having considered the results of the audit were of the view that the Committee should be of a higher profile; and there was a need to promote better understanding by the public on corporate governance and generally, on ethical issues that arise within Local Government.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) The results of the Desk Top Review of policies and processes, as set out in the report and Appendix 1 to the report be noted and the Monitoring Officer be requested to make arrangements for all relevant policies and procedures to be collated and made accessible to staff and members of the public via the intranet and internet sites respectively;
- (2) The results of the consultation with Members, Officers, partner organisations and the general public as set out in Appendix 2 to the report be noted; the Members' Questionnaire to be re-issued with the assistance where possible, of the party group leaders soon after the Summer recess and the results collated, analysed and reported to the next Committee meeting; and the implications of the

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consultation on the work and priorities of the Committee be discussed and agreed by the new Committee as part of its work programme.

- (3) Consideration be given to the setting up of Focus group sessions with consultees who had expressed a willingness to participate, to be considered further at the next meeting of the Committee.
- (4) The Monitoring Officer be authorised to provide feedback to the respondents of the questionnaire.
- (5) The Ethical Standards Audit be repeated in the Autumn of 2007; and the results obtained in 2006 to be used as a 'baseline' for comparison with results obtained subsequently.

#### S62 : RETIREMENT OF INDEPENDENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND NEW COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The Chairperson noted that the terms of office of four of the current independent members namely The Most Reverend Dr Barry Morgan, Archbishop of Wales/Bishop of Llandaff (Chairperson), David Hughes (Vice Chairperson), Elaine Moore and Patricia Jenkins were due to expire on 27 July 2006. Following the resignation of one of the Independent Members, Akmal Hanuk had been appointed to the Committee in November 2005 for a term of four years and would remain on the Committee as an independent member. The retiring independent members would be succeeded by Anne Morgan, Maureen Hedley-Clarke, Paul Stockton and Deirdre Jones who had been appointed by the Council to take up position on the Committee for a period of four years with effect from 27 July 2006.

In accordance with the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001 the appointment of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson would be made by election by the whole of the Committee at its first meeting; and this appointment would be from amongst the independent members of the Committee.

The Monitoring Officer invited the new independent members to give consideration to the requirements of the roles of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson prior to the first meeting of the new Committee and to indicate whether they wished to be nominated for either of the positions

and if so to prepare a pen picture of their experience to assist the Committee in its deliberations when electing the Chair and Vice-Chair.

During discussions, members of the retiring Committee put forward a number of suggestions to assist the new Committee members when taking up their term of office:-

- That relevant training be received as soon as possible;
- to consider the merit of the Independent Members of the Committee continuing to attend other Committee meetings of the Council; the initial reason for observing other Committees was to familiarise themselves with the profile of the Committees and the decision making process of the Council;
- to attend the All Wales Conference to gather information on issues faced by Standards Committees in other Authorities;
- to formulate the Committee's work programme at the first meeting of the new Committee;
- to consider greater use of Task & Finish Groups.
- To consider the use of focus groups as appropriate

Akmal Hanuk expressed his gratitude to the retiring Committee for their assistance and shared experience following his appointment to the Committee in November 2005 and suggested that the new Committee may be able to draw on their experiences and to benefit from the foundations laid by the existing Committee .

In conclusion, the Chair and the independent members of the retiring Committee wished the new Committee success in their future roles.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the discussions be noted;
- (2) expressions of interest for the positions of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson be forwarded to the Monitoring Officer together with a pen picture of their relevant experiences and background to assist the new Committee when electing the Chair and Vice Chair at its first meeting.

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S63 : WORK PLAN

A brief overview was given on the status of the work plan. It was noted that a number of topics remained outstanding from the existing work plan but it would be the responsibility of the new Committee to formulate its own annual work plan for 2006/07 and this item would be placed on the agenda of the first meeting.

Public Interest Report on Members' Allowances – it was noted this had been on the agenda of a previous meeting for information, however, it was pointed out that this was an important document and that the Standards & Ethics Committee should carefully consider the response of the Council.

The Monitoring Officer advised that it was her intention to place this item on the agenda of the first meeting of the new Committee for comment on the Council's response.

Attendance at Other Council Meetings – a discussion took place on the relevance of attendance by Members of the Standards & Ethics Committee at other meetings of the Council. It was pointed out that there was no mechanism for reporting back from attendance at these meetings.

Involvement of Community Councils – the Committee was advised that some initial contact had been made with the Community Councils and this would be followed up in due course.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted and the new work plan be placed on the agenda of the new Committee for decision.

S64 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

That a meeting be held at the end of September/beginning of October and suggested dates would be circulated to be agreed by the new Committee.