

STANDARDS & ETHICS COMMITTEE

24 MARCH 2009

Present: Independent Members: Akmal Hanuk (Chairperson),
Maureen Hedley-Clarke, Deirdre Jones, Anne Morgan
and Paul Stockton

County Councillor Rowland-James

Community Councillor John Hughes

Apologies: Councillor Tim Davies

S30 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee held on 27 January 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

S31 : EMPLOYEES CODE OF CONDUCT – REVIEW OF SUPPORTING GUIDANCE, PROCEDURES AND RULES

The Committee at its meeting on 27 January 2009 considered report of the Monitoring Officer on the statutory employees code of conduct, adopted by the Council on 28 July 2001. The Committee noted that the guidance procedures and rules supporting the implementation of and resolved that a review of the procedural rules and guidelines which supports the code should be undertaken.

The Committee was advised that the staff awareness and understanding of duties under the code was considered as part of the ethical audit conducted in July 2006. The statistical information contained in the ethical audit highlighted the need for staff training and awareness raising on the employees code. Areas particularly requiring attention include:-

- Officers' personal interests requires particular attention as the rules are out of date;
- Officers' hospitality – the Committee previously reviewed the threshold for registration for both Members and Officers and received regular reports on Members hospitality, but the issue of Officers'

hospitality has not been specifically considered – the current employee code contains no express requirement for authorisation for receipt of hospitality to employees. A simplified and consistent process for registration of Officers' personal interests and hospitality should be established.

- Political neutrality – there appears to be no general guidance on employees' obligation of political neutrality or additional restrictions applicable to politically restricted posts.

The Committee noted that the guidance on the employee code of conduct was circulated to all staff when the code was adopted in 2001 however there has been no other guidance or specific training on the code for existing employees.

In particular, the Council has a number of additional policies relating to equality including:

- (1) Strategic Equal Opportunities Policy
- (2) Policies on sexual orientation, culture, religion and belief, and harassment

The Committee discussed the information presented, specifically issues relating to:

- (a) Officers' personal interests;
- (b) Officers' hospitality
- (c) Political neutrality

Following which it was

RESOLVED – That the Monitoring Officer be requested to:

- (1)
 - i. Review any existing guidance and draft amended or new guidance as appropriate;
 - ii. Review and update all associated forms;
 - iii. Arrange for training and awareness raising to be provided via all service area management teams
- (2) Provide an update to the Committee in twelve months time on the implementation of (1) above.

S32 : STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

The Committee was given an overview of the response from Cardiff Council in respect to the Committee on Standards in Public Life consultation on Local Leadership in Public Trust, openness and accountability in local and London government. At its last meeting, the Committee had formed a Task and Finish group to coordinate the response to the consultation paper.

The Committee had completed a questionnaire as part of the consultation and had gathered views through a number of questions including:

- (1) Executive models of decision making
- (2) Accountability
- (3) Senior responsibilities

RESOLVED – That the uptake be noted.

S33 : ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

The Committee in 2008 established a Task and Finish group to prepare its 2008/09 annual report for submission to Council.

The Committee had a number of priorities for the year including:-

- Member development
- Employee code of conduct
- Governance audit
- Strengthening relationships with community councils, the media and Members, this is ongoing
- Raising the profile of the Committee
- All Wales standard conference

RESOLVED - that a Task and Finish group be established comprising all members of the Committee to compile its 2008/09 annual report for submission to Council.

S34 : MONITORING OFFICERS' VERBAL UPDATE

- (1) Standards Committees Conference (Wales) 2009 – the Monitoring

Officer advised that the invitation by Cardiff Council to host the annual Standards Committees Conference (Wales) had been formally accepted. The Committee agreed that a Task and Finish group should be established to compile a program for the conference.

- (2) Future meetings with Party Whips – The Committee at its meeting in January 2009 agreed that it would be beneficial for future meetings to agenda items of interest by the Committee and Party Whips for discussion.

The monitoring Officer advised that she had attended a meeting with the Party Whips, the suggestion to have specific topics for discussion at meetings of the Standards and Ethics Committee was accepted as a beneficial way forward. It was proposed that the next meeting with Party Whips would discuss the running of the Budget Council meeting.

- (3) Member Development

The Monitoring Officer advised that the most appropriate way forward for Member Development had been raised with the Party Whips, as there had been an issue in respect of attendance at Member training sessions. Member Development is particularly important for achieving charter status.

S35 : WORK PROGRAMME

The contents of the Work Programme were updated to take account of the Committees work over the 2009/10 period.

S36 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee agreed that the meeting scheduled for 21 April 2009 would be cancelled, the next meeting will next be held on 27 May 2009.