

Standards Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2008

Present:

Mr J.A. Snadden – In the Chair
Councillors Burns, O’Callaghan, Sandiford and Whitmore.

ST/08/13 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2008.

ST/08/14 Annual Governance Statement

A report of the City Solicitor was submitted inviting the Committee to note the contents of the governance code and annual governance statement (AGS) and provide any comments particularly in relation to the work of the Standards Committee.

The Committee noted that the new CIPFA/SOLACE governance framework ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government’ stated that good governance relates to the whole organisation. The Council was previously required to publish an annual statement on the effectiveness of its internal control framework for approval alongside the Council’s financial statements, this requirement had now been replaced by the requirement to adopt a Code and to prepare an AGS to review its arrangements against the Code.

The Code was therefore a public statement setting out how the Council would meet its commitment to have in place culture, values, systems and processes to ensure it operates effectively and achieves its objectives. The Code incorporates the following six principles:

- 1. focussing on the Council’s purpose and community needs;*
- 2. having clear responsibilities and arrangements for accountability;*
- 3. good conduct and behaviour;*
- 4. taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and risk management;*
- 5. developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective;*
and
- 6. engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.*

The Committee noted that the Governance Framework provided a recommended framework for the Code and this had been tailored to reflect Manchester’s values and

the arrangements that the Council had in place to meet the six principles outlined above.

Members highlighted the importance of training for members to enable a better understanding of the fine distinction between the code of conduct and the wider ethical framework, and to ensure that members were clear about the relationship of the code to their involvement in the work of quasi-judicial bodies. Officers indicated that as part of developing the new governance framework it was envisaged that further work would need to be done to clearly define of the relationship between the Council and partner organisations, part of which would involve clarification of the role of members in partnership working arrangements. Members also emphasised the importance that monitoring officers delivered consistent interpretations on the application of the code so that differential standards were not established by individual authorities. Officers indicated that it was the role of the Standards Board for England to provide advice and guidance to ensure that the standards regime was implemented consistently.

A member suggested that the Governance Statement should be signed by both the leaders of the majority group and the main opposition group.

Decision

To endorse the Annual Governance Statement and to commend it to the City Council.

ST/08/15 Annual Report of the Standards Committee

A report of the City Solicitor was submitted inviting the Committee to comment on and approve the draft report, for presentation to the next meeting of Council on 9th July 2008.

The report formed part of the work to raise the profile of ethical governance within the Council and discharged the responsibility set out in Article 12 of the Constitution which provides that the Standards Committee will 'report annually to Council on ethical governance within the City Council'. At an earlier meeting the Committee had agreed the format and scope of the annual report and the draft submitted reflected the format and scope then agreed.

Decision

To approve the report for submission to the City Council on 9th July 2008.

ST/08/16 Register of Member Interests

The Register was available for examination by members of the Committee.

ST/08/17 Jabeen Mirza

Members noted that this was the last meeting that Jabeen would be attending and wished her well in her future career with the Standards Board for England.