

Standards Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd June 2009

Present:

Mrs A. Isles– In the Chair
Councillors Ali, Burns, Evans, O'Callaghan and Whitmore.
Mrs. E. Carmichael

ST/09/1 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 17th November 2008.

ST/09/2 Welcome

The Chair welcomed representatives from the Standards Board. Reference was made to Minute ST/08/27 from the previous meeting regarding members' dissatisfaction that the 2008 Annual Assembly had not been a totally successful engagement so far as delegates were concerned. The representatives of the Standards Board indicated that similar views expressed from delegate feedback had been noted and changes had been introduced to make the 2009 Assembly more inclusive.

ST/09/3 Annual Governance Statement

The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive, City Treasurer and City Solicitor presenting the draft Annual Governance Statement that had been produced following the second annual review of governance and the internal control environment within the Council. The Head of Financial Management presented the report and explained how internal and external reviews fed into the overall review process

A member referred to Section 31 and the reference to the support given to ward councillors. He suggested that the draft AGS should contain more information regarding the representative role of members within their local communities to reflect the increased government focus on this part of the role of councillor.

Decision

Subject to this comment, to note the findings set out in the draft Annual Governance Statement and the actions identified to further develop or strengthen elements of the control environment during 2009/10.

ST/09/4 Draft revised Code of Corporate Governance

The Committee considered a report of the City Solicitor outlining revisions to the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

Decision

To endorse the report

ST/09/5 Ethical Governance update

The Committee considered a report of the City Solicitor updating members on developments in ethical governance matters and seeking comments on proposals for the next issue of the Members Update and the draft Annual Report 2009/10.

The Committee noted that the Standards Board anticipated that the Government would publish the outcomes of the consultation round on proposed amendments to the Code in the Autumn, and this would feature in the next Members Update.

A member suggested that more positive references needed to be made about the work that has been done within the Council to maintain high standards of probity for Manchester councillors' conduct, and to present this in the context of the current high profile being given to failures in such probity in other public sectors.

Turning to look at training needs for members, it was suggested that examination of real cases might provide a useful and more interesting training vehicle that would highlight potential danger areas for councillors. The Standards Board noted that training materials of this type were available on their website. It was also suggested that IdeA might be invited to outline what they offered in terms of tailored training for members. Reference was also made to the need for engagement by the Local Government Association so that local authorities could put forward their views about the emerging European Code at the formative stage as opposed to being consultees when the proposals are already formulated.

Decision

1. To note the arrangements for the next edition of the Members' Briefing and the timing to coincide with the publication by the Standards Board of the outcomes of the consultation on proposed changes to the Code.
2. To agree the format of the Annual Report of the Standards Committee, subject to the comments now made.