

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA**STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 17 JANUARY 2007****COUNCIL – 24 JANUARY 2007****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW AND ADMINISTRATION****ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
JANUARY – DECEMBER 2006**

The purpose of this report is to inform the Council of the work undertaken by the Standards Committee in the calendar year 2006.

FOR INFORMATION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Standards Committee met five times this year to consider a number of matters.
- 1.2 At their last meeting for the year 2006, one of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment inspectors was in attendance to observe the proceedings. After the meeting he made positive comments about how the Committee members approached their work on maintaining high standards in public office.

2. THE WORK PROGRAMME**2.1 18 January 2006 meeting**

- 2.1.1 The Committee considered a consultation paper on 'Standards of Conduct in English Local Government: The Future'. This consultation paper responded to the recommendations from the Graham Select Committee, the House of Commons Select Committee and the Standards Board for England for amending the Code of Conduct.
- 2.1.2 The Committee also considered three other consultation documents on a Code of Conduct for Employees, Paying Political Assistants and Political Restrictions on local government employees.
- 2.1.3 The Committee noted the establishment of an Audit Committee and agreed that the Chairmen of both the Audit and Standards

Committees should meet with the Leader of the Council, informally, once a year to discuss corporate governance issues.

- 2.1.4 Sir Michael Ridley announced his retirement from office as an independent Member of the Committee.

2.2 12 April 2006 meeting

- 2.2.1 There was a special meeting held by the Committee to consider a request for dispensation from eight members of Cabinet. The matter related to the establishment of a local authority trading company that would bid for a Council care contract.

The Committee granted dispensations to all eight Cabinet Members.

2.3 24 May 2006 Meeting

- 2.3.1 At the Annual meeting of the Council, the first meeting of the Standards Committee for the next municipal year was held. The Committee welcomed and appointed Miss Sophia Lambert CB as its new Chairman.

2.4 8 June 2006 meeting

- 2.4.1 The Committee received a presentation from Mrs Moyra McGarvey, the Chief Internal Auditor. She gave an update on the work of the Council's Internal Audit team, including the role of internal audit, the Audit Committee, fraud and the national fraud initiative.
- 2.4.2 The Committee received a report on the Relevant Authorities (Standards Committees) (Amendment) Regulations 2006, which covered new rules on access to Standards Committee meetings and access to information.
- 2.4.3 The Committee members viewed a DVD produced by the Standards Board for England entitled "Going Local". The DVD showed best practice in conducting investigations and hearing complaints against Councillors. Members may wish to note that the video was partly filmed in the Royal Borough and Kensington Town Hall appears in the background.

2.5 18 October 2006 meeting

- 2.5.1 At their October meeting the Committee considered the Cornerstone Paper "A Question of Standards" written by two members of Parliament on the Code of Conduct. The Committee also considered a response to the paper from the Standards Board for England. The paper was critical of the workings of the

Code of Conduct, the performance of the Standards Board for England and monitoring officers. The Standards Board in reply refuted many of the allegations and clarified the way the Code of Conduct works.

- 2.5.2 The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee reported back on their attendance at the Standards Board for England's conference. They found the conference useful and informative, particularly as it provided an opportunity to network with members of other local authorities' Standards Committees. However, the value of the conference was lessened by the fact that neither the draft of the proposed new Code of Conduct nor the expected White Paper on Local Government was yet available. It was noted at the conference that the release of the new draft Code of Conduct was imminent.
- 2.5.3 The Committee also considered a report on the Survey of Public Attitudes to Conduct in Public Life 2006.

3. STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND BULLETINS

- 3.1 Throughout the year the Committee received and considered Bulletins produced by the Standards Board for England. Where necessary they instructed the Monitoring Officer (or in one case asked the Chairman) to circulate the Bulletins, or extracts from them, to Councillors so they were given appropriate guidance regularly, and kept informed of relevant conduct issues.

4. TRAINING AND RAISING OF AWARENESS

- 4.1 Under the auspices of the Standards Committee, the Monitoring Officer provided training to newly elected Members in May 2006 on the Code of Conduct and corporate governance issues.
- 4.2 This training has now been extended to Council Officers. On 14 December 2006 the Monitoring Officer provided a seminar on the Code of Conduct to fourteen Officers from all the Business Groups. The next seminar is scheduled for 19 January 2007 for a much larger group of officers.
- 4.3 Arrangements have been put in place to provide further training to the Standards Committee Members on the new draft Code of Conduct as soon as it is released. All Councillors would be invited to the seminar. Rockpools would run the seminar.

It is intended to run similar sessions for officers in the New Year, led by the Monitoring Officer.

5. RECOMMENDATION

Council is invited to note the work of the Committee in the year 2006.

**GIFTY EDILA
DIRECTOR OF LAW AND ADMINISTRATION**

Background papers used in preparing this report – Access to Information

Committee reports for Standards Committee January – December 2006

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