

A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
WAS HELD ON 5 OCTOBER 2006

Membership:

Councillors Gill ,Kimber (P), Langdon (P), Redrup (P), Smith (P) and Wright

Independent Members: Mr M J Heritage-Owen (P)
Mr R V Perry (P)

20. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Gill and Wright.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

22. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Governance Committee held on 14 September 2006 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

23. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

24. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

25. USE OF RESOURCES

The Committee received a Powerpoint presentation given by the Borough Treasurer to inform Members about the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) external inspection and the new test for the use of resources.

The new test, stricter than previously, measured the financial management and governance competency of the organisation. There were five themes, divided into eleven key lines of enquiry (KLOEs), each assessed with scores between 1 to 4, with an overall score being given to determine whether the Council was rated as 'poor', 'fair', 'good' or 'excellent'.

The KLOEs were as follows:

- Financial reporting – Annual Accounts/ external accountability;

- Financial Management – Financial Strategy/budget performance/asset base management;
- Financial Standing – managing spending within resources;
- Internal Control – Management of Business risk/internal control arrangements/arrangements for proper conduct of business; and
- Value for Money – achieving value for money/ pro-active approach to improving and obtaining value for money.

The Council's score for use of resources, at the previous CPA, was 2 (adequate); the aim was to improve to gain a score of 3 by 2008. There was a need to improve in order to underpin the Council's other management initiatives and it was important to eliminate any scores of 1, which would preclude an overall score of 3, a requisite for eventually becoming an 'excellent' council.

The Borough Treasurer reported that six-monthly reviews were being carried out using the CIPFA Financial Management Model and the Use of Resources self-assessment checklist to match and analyse results in order to assess progress.

The Council's Performance Management Framework would assist in recording evidence of improvements; Service Improvement Plans (SIPs) included actions leading to improvements and the Council's Management Team and the Resources Sub Group monitored progress. Reports would be presented to the Committee periodically for Members to also monitor progress.

During the presentation, Members sought clarification of some aspects of the process and expressed particular interest in the present position and progress of the Council's Asset management Plan and Capital Strategy. The Borough Treasurer explained that whilst information and records were available, these needed to be collated and be accessible from one source. External support had been engaged to assist Officers in this regard.

Members reiterated their decision, agreed at the meeting held on 14 September 2006 that progress on asset management should be monitored by them at each meeting.

The Borough Treasurer was thanked for his presentation and for clarification of this complex area of CPA.

RESOLVED: That the information on the Use of Resources, presented by the Borough Treasurer, be noted.

26. WORK AREAS FOR THE COMMITTEE – 2006/2007

Consideration was given to a report advising the Committee on the direction of governance work for the Municipal Year 2006-2007.

The recent local government white paper had called on councils to review their Constitutions at least every five years to ensure that their democratic arrangements delivered an efficient, transparent and accountable council. This review was being carried out in a number of stages and a projected timetable for the completion of projects was detailed in the report.

There were also a number of other governance issues which it was proposed to consider during the year that would be in accordance with targets of good practice set by The Standards Board for England.

The Committee recognised the importance of having appropriate systems in place to deliver high standards of governance which minimised the risk of loss of tangible resources and reputation to the Council.

In answer to a Member's question, the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer explained the breadth of the Committee's responsibilities; some areas would require more involvement than others. There were some elements that were as a result of the agreed Corporate Action Statement (CAS) and others that were statutory requirements.

With regard to the proposed work programme, the Chairman requested that the Committee had sight of the draft 'Statement of Internal Control' and also that Members should be made aware of any outside organisations involved in assessing the performance of the Council. The Head of Internal Audit and Risk Assurance confirmed that any key recommendations from reports would be brought to the Committee's attention. Members agreed that there was also a need to be satisfied that Council grants awarded to outside organisations achieved value for money.

Members recognised that the Committee's responsibilities were to give assurances to the Council that policies and best practice were in place and being implemented.

Consideration was given to the proposed work areas and, in order to facilitate the work programme, the Committee agreed to an additional meeting being held on 14 December 2006.

RESOLVED: That (a) the work programme for the Committee be as set out in Sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.5 of the report; and

(b) an additional meeting be held on Thursday 14 December at 6.00pm in Committee Room 2 at the Town Hall.

27. ANY OTHER ITEMS

There were no other items, which by reason of special circumstances, were for

consideration as a matter of urgency at this meeting.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and concluded at 7.28pm

CHAIRMAN