

**A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
WAS HELD ON 17 MARCH 2011**

Councillors Burgess (P), Chegwyn (P), Forder (P), Kimber (P), Scard (P) and Wright (P).

Independent Members: Mr R V Perry (P) and Mr G Lidgley (P).

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

47. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Governance Committee held on 20 January 2011 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

48. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

49. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

PART II

50. TRANSPARENCY AGENDA AND FUTURE OF THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND

Consideration was given to a report of the Monitoring Officer on the above.

It was reported that the Government had produced a number of consultation documents relating to the transparency agenda for the publication of information by local authorities. In February this year a consultation began on the draft Code of Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency. The consultation period ended on 14 March 2011 so at this moment in time there is no legislative requirement for the Council to publish or to publish in any particular manner information relating to Members attendance at meetings or their register of interest.

The Government had announced its intention to change the current Standards Regime and to abolish the Standards Board for England in the Localism Bill, which was published on 13 December 2010. In the Localism Bill the Government have said they will abolish the Standards Board Regime and instead it will become a criminal offence for Councillors to deliberately with-hold or misrepresent a personal interest.

The Bill is currently still at the Committee stage in the House of Commons and as yet there is

no indication on the Community and Local Government's website as to when the Bill may become an Act. However discussion had started amongst Hampshire authorities as to the possibility of a Hampshire wide Voluntary Code of Conduct and reciprocal arrangements for investigating allegations of Breach of any such Voluntary Code.

Councillor Chegwyn on transparency felt that the council was not doing enough compared to the County Council and other District Councils in publishing on its website what meetings Councillors attended, gifts and hospitality claimed by Councillors, individual Councillor's Register of Interests and Allowances claimed. The Monitoring Officer responded by pointing out that the council was not staffed sufficiently to embark currently on such a programme of work, time and resources were an important issue for the council on any planned work. When such provisions became law the council would undertake such work once. The council was not complacent and would plan for the implementation of such provisions. Much of what was required under the Bill is currently on the council's website.

Councillor Chegwyn accordingly proposed that the council include on its website what Hampshire County Council currently displays on its website concerning individual councillor attendance at meetings, claims and recorded interests as quickly as possible in the name of transparency without spending vast sums of money. Brief reports from councillors also to be included on the website concerning training received and attendance on conferences and trips.

The above proposal was amended in the light of the additional anticipated costs for such work. Officers were requested to come back to the Committee at its next meeting in April with the cost of undertaking the website work in Councillor Chegwyn's proposal. The amendment was put to the meeting and carried and the proposal as amended was agreed.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) the report of the Monitoring Officer be noted; and
- b) officers report to the next Committee meeting on 21 April with a cost breakdown of the work required to include on the council's website what Hampshire County Council currently displays on its website concerning individual councillor attendance at meetings, claims and recorded interests.

51. INTERNAL AUDIT MONITORING STATEMENT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2010 TO 31 DECEMBER 2010

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Internal Audit & Risk Assurance which tabled the performance of the Internal Audit Section for the first nine months of 2010/11 (1 April 2010 – 31 December 2010) against the agreed audit plan. The report also provided Members with an update on other key internal audit business within that same period.

The report detailed the use of Internal Audit resources, the Internal Audit Partnership, the commencement of 4 fundamental audits, the completion of two fundamental reviews in

Payroll and Council Tax and the completion of specific audits within Units during the year; with overall no areas of major concern being highlighted. In addition the Committee had before it a report from the Audit Commission on their work covering the grant claim for 2009/10.

Councillor Wright queried paragraph 2.9 of the report and requested further information on the recommendations for the two areas mentioned. The Head of Internal Audit & Risk Assurance responded that he did not have this information to hand and would forward the requested information to Councillor Wright outside the meeting.

The Borough Treasurer updated the meeting on the Audit Commission's letter on the Report on grant claim certification 2009/10.

Upon Member Questioning the Head of Internal Audit & Risk Assurance acknowledged that due to reductions in staff next year's Internal Audit Plan would be much tighter to manage.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) the Committee finds that the performance of the Internal Audit Section from 1 April 2010 to 31 December 2010 has satisfactorily been reviewed; and
- b) the Head of Internal Audit's report on other key internal audit business during the above period be noted.

52. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2011/12

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Internal Audit & Risk Assurance which provided the Committee with the planned annual coverage of Internal Audit resources for 2011/2012.

RESOLVED: That the 2011/2012 Internal Audit Plan, as attached in Appendix One of the report of the Head of Internal Audit & Risk Assurance, be approved without amendment.

53. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES AND ANALYSIS

Consideration was given to a report of the Leisure and Corporate Services Manager which requested Members to consider an analysis of complaints for the first 6 months of the current financial year (2010/11).

Members were advised that a full review of complaints for the complete financial year would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee in July 2011.

Councillor Wright complained at the length of time it was taking to circulate Stage 3 Panel meeting notes. For the last meeting it had taken two months from the Panel meeting. The Chief Executive advised that this was a work load issue and he gave a commitment that the notes of Panel meetings would be circulated within 2 weeks of the Panel meeting. In answer

to an enquiry from a Stage 3 Panel member the Chief Executive confirmed that future Stage 3 Panel meeting notes would be circulated to Panel members prior to their final distribution.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Leisure and Corporate Services Manager be noted.

54. STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Consideration was given to the Workplan of the Standards and Governance Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Workplan be noted.

55. ANY OTHER ITEMS

Councillor Chegwyn referred to the recent sad death of the Head of Electoral Services. He enquired of the Monitoring Officer whether the Electoral Registration Office in the above circumstances were able to cope with a pending By Election.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the Electoral Registration Section would staff up for the proposed Referendum in May. The Section would also provide additional resources for any By Election which would become a combined Referendum/By Election for the area in question. She confirmed that additional resources would be provided through the appointment of a temporary Elections Manager and enquires had been made of the Association of Electoral Administrators in this regard. If a By Election is to be called a Deputy Returning Officer would be appointed; in this case at the County Council, as a Notice of Vacancy had been received as County Councillor Mrs Snaith-Tempia had resigned from the Gosport Lee Ward.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and concluded at 6.44pm.

CHAIRMAN