
REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD ON 26 MARCH 2007

Chairman: * The Right Revd Peter Broadbent

Councillors: * Mrs Janet Cowan * Jean Lammiman
* B E Gate * Joyce Nickolay
* Mrs Kinnear * Phillip O'Dell

Independent Persons: * Ms Sheila Darr * Mr Mohammad Rizvi
* Dr J Kirkland

* Denotes Member present

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION I - Protocol for Dealing with Complaints**

Your Committee received the draft of a proposed Protocol for dealing with complaints of breaches of the Code of Conduct for Councillors and/or Local Protocols. Members noted that adoption of the Protocol would demonstrate that arrangements were in place to ensure that the Committee would carry out their responsibilities in a regularised manner. It was noted that the Protocol would be in effect from now until April 2008, when changes were expected following the Local Government Bill.

Members suggested two amendments to the draft, the first making clear Members' right to make representations during an investigation, and secondly that 'consider' should be inserted into the flow chart.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Council)

That the revised Protocol for Dealing with Complaints, incorporating the comments above, be adopted.

(See also Minute 51).

PART II - MINUTES45. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

46. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.

47. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That (1) in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following item be admitted to the meeting by virtue of the special circumstances and grounds for urgency stated below:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Special Circumstances / Grounds for Urgency</u>
9. Protocol for Dealing with Complaints - The Draft Protocol	There were delays in finalising the draft Protocol at the time the agenda was printed and circulated. Members were requested to consider this item, as a matter of urgency.

(2) all items be considered with the press and public present.

48. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That (1) the minutes of the ordinary meetings held on 19 September and 5 December 2006 be taken as read and signed as correct records;

(2) the minutes of the Special meeting held on 1 March 2007 be deferred until printed in the Council Bound Minute Volume.

49. **Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rules 19, 16 and 17 (Part 4B of the Constitution) respectively.

50. **Whistleblowing Policy:**

Members considered a report of the Head of Human Resources, which introduced a revised Whistleblowing Policy, following contributions from a previous meeting of the Standards Committee.

Members were informed that the draft policy now included improved guidance on the whistleblowing procedure and detailed how to raise a concern. An officer reminded Members that a flowchart with a list of regulatory bodies was appended to the draft which would assist an employee if they felt they required assistance outside the Authority or if the matter was outside the Authority's jurisdiction.

A Member queried the references of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1988 and suggested that a simplified explanation be provided within the Policy. In addition, the officer was asked to replace the word "verbally" throughout the Policy with the word "orally", and correct errors in the numbering of paragraphs.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the suggested amendments above, the revised Whistleblowing Policy be approved.

51. **Protocol for Dealing with Complaints:**

Further to Recommendation I above, the Chairman informed the Committee that the four Independent Members of Harrow had attended a cross borough event in Brent on the Code of Conduct. The event was hosted by Peter Keith-Lucas who had spoken of good practice in relation to the Code within authorities. The Chairman advised that Harrow appeared to be following the best practice as suggested by Mr Keith-Lucas and wished to congratulate Harrow's officers on the high quality of work and briefings provided to Members.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

52. **Briefing on The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill:**
The Committee received a report of the Director of Legal and Governance Services, which updated Members on the progress and timescale for the introduction of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, particularly in relation to the development of standards and governance.

The Director outlined the increased impact that there would be on the Standards Committee once the Standards Board had downsized its responsibilities and taken on a redefined, more strategic role. Allegations of misconduct would be referred to the Standards Committee in the first instance to decide whether to investigate and a quick turnaround in responding would be expected. Members noted and were concerned by the increased workload and the additional meetings that would be required. The need for a workable system was emphasized and an increase in the size of the Standards Committee membership was suggested, in order to cope with the increased workload. Members were opposed to a Joint Standards Committee and Sub-Committee with Brent Council to hear complaints, as it was felt that each borough had its own systems and ways of working.

RESOLVED: That (1) the implications of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill be noted; and

(2) the consideration of any necessary steps in anticipation of the introduction of the Bill be deferred until the autumn meeting of the Standards Committee.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.47 pm).

(Signed) THE RIGHT REVD PETER BROADBENT
Chairman