

Ethical Framework Update

Standards Committee

Date: 24 July 2006

Author: Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)

Wards Affected: All

Purpose

- To provide an update on various matters related to the Ethical Framework.

Recommendation

- That the Ethical Framework update be noted.
- That Members of the Committee determine whether it is appropriate to support the work of the Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England, and determine what form any support should take.
- That Members of the Committee be asked to advise the Monitoring Officer if they wish to attend the Standards Board Annual Conference on 16th and 17th October.
- That the date of the next meeting of the Standards Committee be moved to 23rd October so that those who wish to attend the Standards Board Conference may do so.

1. Reasons

- 1.1 To keep the Standards Committee informed of issues of probity in the Council.

2. Detail

Promotion of Ethical Standards

- 2.1 The Monitoring Officer included in the Team Brief for May 2006 to all staff an outline of the work of the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer, and reminded staff of the Whistleblowing Policy.
- 2.2 Induction Training for new members of the Council in May included a session on standards of conduct and probity in the decision making process, and a further session, open to all members, is scheduled for a 7th September 2006.

Standards Board Bulletins

- 2.3 The Standards Board Bulletins for April 2006 (Issue 28) and May 2006 (Issue 29) are attached at Appendix '1' and '2'. The Monitoring Officer will highlight key areas of interest at the meeting.

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Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire Independent Standards Committee Members' Forum

- 2.4 A meeting of the Forum hosted by the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority took place at Bracknell Forest Borough Council on Friday 21st April. A copy of the minutes of the meeting are attached at Appendix '3'. Mr Trevor Davis attended and will report further on any key issues that were discussed.
- 2.5 The next meeting of the Forum is scheduled for 11am on Friday 27th October 2006 at County Hall, Trowbridge.

Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England (AIMSce)

- 2.6 An association for Independent Members of Standards Committees (AIMSce) has recently been established. The Inaugural meeting of the Association will take place in Birmingham on 16th October, at the annual Standards Conference. A letter outlining the purpose of the association and an agenda for the first meeting is attached at Appendix '4'.
- 2.7 The letter proposes that Monitoring Officers recognise and support the work of AIMSce, and provide Independent Members with allowance to join and maintain membership of AIMSce, and provide the association with a grant to assist with set up costs for the association.
- 2.8 The Council has recently amended its Schemes of Allowances, and now includes an allowance for Independent Members and Chair of the Standards Committee. It is anticipated that if Independent Members wished to be part of AIMSce that the membership fees should be drawn from this allowance.
- 2.9 The initial view of many of the Monitoring Officers in this region is that each authority should give the necessary support to the Independent Members of its Standards Committee and that a National Association of Independent Members would lead to unnecessary bureaucracy. There was support for the continuation of the existing informal regional meetings of Independent Members and, if necessary, support from the Standards Board for England being provided at such meetings.
- 2.10 The view of the Committee is sought whether further assistance for the set up of the association is appropriate.

Annual Standards Board Conference

- 2.11 The next Annual Standards Board Conference in Birmingham will be held on 16th and 17th October 2006, and will be entitled: 'Bridging the gap:'

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Stephen Taylor on Direct Dial on 01793 463012 or Email staylor@swindon.gov.uk.

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towards effective local regulation'. Members are asked to advise the Monitoring Officer if they wish to attend the conference. Due to the date of the conference, it will be necessary to move the date of the next Standards Committee. A revised date of 23rd October 2006 is proposed.

Alternative Options

- None

Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- Independent Members and Chair of the Standards Committee are entitled to receive allowances under the Council's Allowance Scheme. It is anticipated that if Independent Members wished to be part of AIMSce that membership fees should be drawn from this allowance. If the Committee wished to provide support for the set up costs of AIMSce this would need funding to be identified.

Legal / Human Rights Implications

- None

Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises)

- Monitoring of issues of probity in the Council underpins the Council's plans and policies and to the delivery of the 2010 objectives.

Consultees

- Deputy Chief Executive
- Group Director, Resources
- The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports).

Background Papers and Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Standards Board Bulletin Issue 28 (April 2006)
- Appendix 2 – Standards Board Bulletin Issue 29 (May 2006)
- Appendix 3 - Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire Independent Standards Committee Members' Forum – 21st April 2006.
- Appendix 4 - Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England (AIMSce) Letter and Meeting Agenda