

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 20 MARCH 2006

PRESENT:- Mr Keith Carby (Chair), Mr Trevor Davies (Vice-Chair), Mr Mike Compton, Councillor Melanie Duff, Councillor Maurice Fanning and Councillor Mike Every.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Paul Morris.

30. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

31. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 30th January 2006, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

32. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

33. Exempt Items - Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved - That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the discussion of the matters referred in Agenda Item 8 on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information concerned (Minute 37 refers.)

34. Ethical Framework Update

The Committee received a report from the Director of Law and Democratic Services providing an update on the Ethical Framework. The Committee noted in particular the copy of the decision of the Adjudication Panel for England in respect of Mr Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, and discussed how the written decision demonstrated the stages of a local investigation hearing.

Resolved – That the Ethical Framework report be noted.

35. Employee Code of Conduct

The Director of Human Resources and Director of Law and Democratic Services presented a draft Code of Conduct for Swindon Borough Council employees for comment. The Code would be subject to consultation with staff representatives and interested parties, prior to coming back to the Standards Committee for approval.

Resolved – (1) That the Committee commends the draft Code of Conduct for consultation, subject to the Director of Human Resources making the following amendments: -

- Clarification of the wording of paragraph 2.6 (Alcohol and Drugs) to make the clear the distinctions between the use of medication (whether or not prescribed) and of substance misuse.
- Clarification of the wording of paragraph 3.4 (Criminal Charges and convictions) to make it clear to employees what should be declared, and if both convictions and contraventions, including bind-overs.

(2) That the Director of Human Resources investigate the provision of a room in the council offices for employees to take medication or rest when feeling unwell.

36.

Whistleblowing

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Internal Audit and Director of Law and Democratic Services providing a summary of the cases received under the Council's Whistleblowing policy, details of the action taken and the subsequent results and current status of the whistleblower.

Resolved – (1) That the contents of the report be noted;

(2) That the Standards Committee agrees that it can place reliance on the current arrangements for Whistleblowing as part of the Council's wider assurance framework;

(3) That the Committee agrees that no whistleblower should be disadvantaged in their employment as a result of making an allegation. To this end the Head of Internal Audit be requested to write to Members of the Committee in respect of case number 2, to provide details to confirm that the resulting redeployment was not to the disadvantage of the officer concerned; and

(4) That the Director of Law and Democratic Services and Head of Internal Audit consider if any trend in the reporting of cases can be found, such as links to promotions of the whistleblowing policy, and any patterns be reported back to the Committee.

37.

Complaints and Investigations Update

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Corporate Governance on various complaints and investigations, including complaints to the Standards Board for England, and breaches of the Member/ Officer Protocol.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted; and

(2) That a training session be set up on the morning of the next hearing, to further prepare the Members of the Committee to take part in the hearing process.