

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 6th July 2004 at 7.40 pm

PRESENT: John Mann (Chair, Independent Member), Nav Mandair (Vice-Chair, Independent Member) and Councillor Nerva.

1. **Welcome**

Members welcomed Nav Mandair to her first meeting following her appointment as Vice-Chair on the Committee and also welcomed John Mann following his re-appointment as Chair.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

None.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting – 15th April 2004**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th April 2004 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. **Matters Arising**

Standards Committee Members' Training

John Mann reported that following a decision made at a previous meeting he had written to the Borough's three Members of Parliament regarding the cost of training for Standards Committee Members which it was felt should be borne by the Standards Board. As reported replies had been received from Sarah Teather, MP and Paul Boateng, MP. However, Barry Gardiner, MP was still pursuing the matter in writing through a series of parliamentary questions and John Mann reported on the recent responses received from Nick Raynsford, MP.

Mock Hearing Exercise

The Chair reported that following the exercise at the previous meeting there had been an exchange of correspondence between himself and the Monitoring Officer which it was hoped would refine the procedure for future use.

6. **Annual Report from the Monitoring Officer**

Terry Osborne (Monitoring Officer) set out the work of the Committee over the past year and the activities with which she had been involved as Monitoring Officer. The Planning Code of Conduct had been reported on in November 2003 as part of the annual review carried out by the Council's internal consultancy team. She also reported on the referrals to the Standards Board for England of which there had been 25 since 2002. In all but six cases the Standards Board had not made any findings. There were still two cases under investigation. Once the Regulations governing the way in which ethical standards officers

from the Standards Board could refer allegations back to the Council's Monitoring Officer for investigation any such referrals would be reported to Committee. Regarding the proposed work programme for the Standards Committee, the Monitoring Officer outlined the planned arrangements. Members' interests and gifts and hospitality would be reported by the audit team hopefully in October. She would also report back on whether it was worthwhile as a good practice exercise for the Council to take part in the IDeA ethical governance audit. It was also planned for a networking event to take place in November as had the previous year in a different format. Also consideration was being given to establishing an independent members' forum for the local area or member authorities of the West London Alliance. A Standards web page was under development and suggestions for items for inclusion would be welcomed. Consideration was also being given to producing Monitoring Officer advice notes and input on possible topics would also be gratefully received. Members were also asked to indicate whether there was a need for any tailored training which could be arranged by the Member Development Manager.

In considering the report Members agreed that it would be useful for a further training session to be arranged in the run up to any future hearing to ensure that Members were entirely familiar with the procedures. It was also noted that consideration was being given to including Members' interests on the Council's website, however there were issues to be resolved requiring any necessary consent and the need to avoid frivolous representations. The Monitoring Officer also agreed to submit a progress report on the governance audit findings. Regarding the establishing of an independent Members' forum, it was agreed that further consideration be given to this in 2005 by which time more authorities would have had the opportunity to hold hearings and contribute more fully to discussions and also to receive the new regulations. Further more detailed consideration would be given to this at future meetings.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place on 19th October 2004.

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm

JOHN MANN
Chair

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