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STANDARDS COMMITTEE

16 JUNE 2015

(19.15 - 20.20)

PRESENT

Councillors: Peter McCabe (Chair), Mary-Jane Jeanes, John Dehaney, Ian Munn, Philip Jones, Pauline Cowper (substitute for Cllr Tobin Byers), David Williams, Najeeb Latif

Co-opted members: Beverley Huie, Nigel Brotherton, Sophie Bowen

Officers: Paul Evans, AD Corporate Governance, Margaret Culleton, Head of Internal Audit & Investigations, Hilary Gullen, Democratic Services

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Derek Prior

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

None

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

Agreed

4 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (Agenda Item 4)

Paul Evans introduced the report, there had been no covert surveillance requests since February 2015.

Committee members agreed that more covert surveillance/investigatory work might be useful for catching fly tippers etc

Paul Evans will request a report from Regulatory Services on overt surveillance, and update data from London Borough of Richmond regarding mechanisms used for investigating fly tipping.

Resolved: the Committee noted the report.

5 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (Agenda Item 5)

Margaret Culleton summarised the report.

Committee members asked questions on the following points:

P9 Can a report be provided on shared services – listing those and the governance arrangements

P15 4.6: Whether partnership performance reports could be put on the internet to be accessible to everyone

P16 4.12: Where the Partnership Register was kept

P19: 7.3 Whether more information on the five borough fraud partnership could be obtained

P21: Whether the new forward plan system could be improved

P25/28 Whether a brief explanation of why actions on improvement plan were carried forward be given (for example, if it was carried over due to a change in circumstances)?

P31: Discussion took place on Disclosure and Barring Service checking, and whether a review was required on the effectiveness of DBS. Beverley Huie gave information from her professional experience that the DBS check is now portable due to a relaxation in requirements. There is a need to 'risk assess' each position. Whether to carry out a DBS is not a preference, but something that needs to be justified and can be challenged by an individual. Once a DBS is registered there is no need for a new check as organisations can access updates online, although they do need updating every three years. There is no need for a DBS if an individual takes up a similar position with a different organisation, ie a school governor taking up another governor post at a different school.

The Committee agreed that a review of Merton's DBS practice, to ensure the use is appropriate and proportionate, would be helpful.

Committee members thanked Beverley for her helpful comments, and acknowledged it showed the value of having independent members on the committee.

Partnership/shared services: clarification was required as to which partnerships and shared services existed, and their structures.

Paul Evans agreed to check whether performance reports were on the internet, and to look at the forward plan timescales and report back to the next meeting.

Paul Evans spoke of the need to track across four or five boroughs to see what opportunities exist for future shared services.

Resolved: Standards Committee agreed the Annual Governance Statement

Paul Evans introduced this report explaining the amendment required to the constitution which has to be done in the first business meeting following the issue of the regulations in May.

Resolved: Committee agreed the recommendation.

7 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 7)

Paul Evans introduced the report, explaining the changes taking place since July 2012 and how declarations vary between boroughs.

Discussion took place regarding the difficulties in understanding what needed to be put in, and that it would be helpful to have guidance alongside the form, based on the questions most frequently received.

Paul Evans clarified that any position of control or management in the borough should be declared, including Trade Union membership, and guidance should be sought for any queries. It was possible that some of the partnership working or shared service arrangements might result in more possible conflicts of interest, and members should be aware of these.

Resolved: Committee agreed the recommendations

8 COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS (Agenda Item 8)

Paul Evans gave a verbal report - no complaints had been received since February.

Resolved: Committee noted the report

9 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 9)

Committee noted that 'Whistleblowing review' should have been added to the October work programme:

Work Programme

October
Gifts and Hospitality Members
Gifts and Hospitality Officers
Annual Complaints Report
Whistleblowing

Every Meeting
Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 authorisations
Complaints against members

As Required
Constitutional Amendments
Polling Places

Specific Items
Constitutional changes – financial regulations
GP terms of reference
Council standing orders and Chief Executive's delegation

The meeting ended at 8.20pm with the Chair and Cllr Williams expressing gratitude to Beverley Huie and Nigel Brotherton for their valuable service on the committee.