

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

Minutes of the meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE which was open to the press and public, held at LEWISHAM TOWN HALL, CATFORD, SE6 4RU on THURSDAY 1 MARCH 2012 at 7:00 p.m.

Present

Independent members: Gill Butler and Sally Hawkins,

Councillors Alan Hall, Stella Jeffrey, Pauline Morrison and Sam Owalabi Oluyole.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brooks, David Roper-Newman, Cathy Sullivan and Leslie Thomas.

<u>Minute No.</u>	<u>Action</u>
1	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></p> <p>None was declared.</p>
2	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>MINUTES</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th December 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair..</p>
3	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ANNUAL REVIEW OF WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND REFERRALS</u></p> <p>Kath Nicholson, Head of Law and Monitoring Officer introduced the report and explained that this is a standard report that is presented to the Committee on an annual basis.</p> <p>Kath Nicholson reported that there had been no referrals since the last report considered by the Standards Committee.</p> <p>It was further explained that the Whistleblowing Policy had been amended recently to reflect the changes necessary as a consequence of the implementation of the Bribery Act 2010 and to also reflect recent staff changes.</p>

Minute
No.
4

Action

LOCALISM ACT 2011 – BRIEFING AND
UPDATE BY HEAD OF LAW

Kath Nicholson, Head of Law and Monitoring Officer gave a further presentation and update on the ethical standards provisions of the Localism Act 2011.

Kath Nicholson explained that Standards for England will be abolished on the 31st March 2012.

There is now a legal requirement for every local authority to promote high standards of member conduct. Kath Nicholson further explained that all local authorities will have to have a local Code of Conduct covering 7 Nolan principles. Whether local authorities have a Standards Committee will be a matter of choice for local authorities.

Investigations and complaints procedures are to be locally determined and will result in the potential for more flexibility.

Kath Nicholson advised the Committee of one new provision which is the need to have an Independent Person who is available to both the investigator and the member concerned. The Independent Person does not have to do the investigation but will have an input in some way.

An Independent Person cannot have been a councillor or co-optee in the previous 5 years . However CLG have recently written to confirm that they are going to put in place transitional provisions to last a year enabling Independent Members to be able to be an Independent Person. Where such a person is appointed to the Independent Person role then local authorities can keep it for as long as they want.

The role of Independent Person has to be appointed following advertisement for the position.

Minute
No.

Action

There was general discussion about the Localism Act generally and the significant changes being brought about , for example, Pay Policy, Ethical Framework , General Power of General Competence, Assets of Community Value and Community Right to Challenge.

An enquiry was raised as to whether the Council has the capacity and resource to conduct sufficient training. Kath Nicholson explained that there had been some training provided and such training would continue. The Member Development and Training arrangements will need to address training needs brought about by these significant changes.

Councillor Hall indicated that there should be relevant member input in the proposed changes brought about by the Localism Act 2011.

Kath Nicholson indicated that there would be one more meeting of the Standards Committee to seek the Committees views on the proposed new Code of Conduct

RESOLVED that the briefing be noted .

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To be arranged

The meeting ended at 7:40pm