

Minutes of:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	17 November 2005
Present:	Councillor K Audin (in the Chair); Councillors E B Briggs, R C A Brown, V D D'Albert, J Grimshaw, T Holt and J F Walton
Independent Members:	A Loyns, K Wainwright and A Withington
Public Attendance:	There were no members of the public in attendance at the meeting.
Apologies for Absence:	Mrs A Brown

S.762 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

S.763 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present to ask questions under this item.

S.764 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Delegated Decision:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2005 be approved and signed as a correct record.

S.765 LOCAL DETERMINATION HEARING

The full written decision of the Local Determination Hearing held on 4 October 2005 was submitted.

In accordance with the decision set out, Councillor Matthews had submitted a written apology to Councillor Creswell and forwarded this to the Chair of the Committee. The letter was circulated for consideration by this Committee.

The Chair of the Hearing Panel, Mrs Anne Brown, had asked that her thanks be conveyed to the other members of the Panel and to Bill Lawley, of Rochdale MBC, who had advised the Panel, David Hanson, Head of Democratic Services, who had acted as Clerk to the Panel and to Chris Shillitto of Democratic Services who had organised the Hearing.

Delegated Decision:

1. That the decision of the Panel be noted.
2. That the letter of apology be approved for submission to Councillor Creswell.

S.766 ALLOWANCES FOR INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

It was reported that the Independent Remuneration Panel had recently considered further the issue of allowances for Independent Members of the Standards Committee in view of representations made by this Committee at its meeting held on 2 June 2005. The Panel had made the following recommendation which was approved by Council on 2 November 2005;

That the payment of out of pocket expenses and loss of earnings allowance up to a maximum of £250 be paid to any Independent Member who sits on a Hearing Panel subject to;

- i. The Independent Members being reminded that travelling and subsistence allowances are already available to them under the Members' Allowance Scheme;
- ii. The Director of Finance and E-government resolving any taxation implications arising out of this decision and subject to him agreeing a suitable means of certification required for loss of earnings.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

S.767 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2004/2005

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted which presented to Members information extracted from the Ombudsman's Annual Report for 2004/2005.

The information which had been extracted from the Report included the following:

- § Analysis of complaints – this provided information on numbers and types of complaints, from a national perspective;
- § Complaint statistics by Authority – an extract of the statistics relating to Greater Manchester Authorities was included, together with the Glossary of Terminology.

It was agreed:

That the information extracted from Ombudsman's Annual Report be noted.

S.768 TRAINING

It was reported that Greater Manchester Authorities, in conjunction with Eversheds, had organised training on 11 November in Oldham and further training would be held in Tameside on 13 December. A programme for the Oldham session had been submitted with the agenda for this meeting. In addition, a list of issues raised at the session in Oldham was submitted.

The sessions focussed on the Code of Conduct, especially in view of the review taking place nationally, and dealt with issues around investigations and hearings.

One of the issues raised had been the obligation under the Code of Conduct to comply with the local authority requirements regarding the use of resources. The Standards Board had expressed the view that this could cause problems if the local authority had no such policy. As such, the Standards Board had said that there should be a nationally agreed document to govern the use of resources. Members indicated that they would welcome clarification on this issue.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

S.769 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Delegated Decision:

That in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business since it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, namely, information relating to a former recipient of a service provided by the Authority.

S.770 OMBUDSMAN CASE – SOCIAL SERVICES

Further to Minute S.568(E) of the last meeting, a briefing note was submitted which provided background information on an Ombudsman case and action taken following the Ombudsman's decision.

Members expressed concern that an officer from the appropriate department had not been able to attend the meeting.

It was agreed:

That the matter be deferred to the next meeting of this Committee on 16 February 2006 and an officer from Adult Care Services be present at the meeting during consideration of the item.

COUNCILLOR K AUDIN
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 7.30 pm)