



### STANDARDS COMMITTEE

10:05am – 10:55am

17 December 2010

Present: Mr C Thrower (vice chair) (in the chair), Councillors Gihawi and Lay

Apologies: Mr P Franzen (chair) and Councillors Blower, Lubbock and Wiltshire

#### 1. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2010.

##### Implementation executive

The scrutiny officer said that, in view of the High Court judgement concerning unitary status, it would not be appropriate for the standards committee to investigate the expenses paid to members of the implementation executive.

**RESOLVED** to note the position.

##### Increasing confidence in democracy

The vice chair reported that he had continued to attend council meetings in his role as an independent member.

#### 2. PROVISION OF MONITORING OFFICER AND DEPUTY MONITORING OFFICER FOR NORWICH CITY COUNCIL

The head of legal and democratic services presented the report and answered questions concerning the legal service provided by nplaw and the future roles, in respect of standards issues, for the head of legal democratic services and the monitoring officer.

**RESOLVED** to note the appointment of David Johnson as monitoring officer and Victoria McNeil and Chris Skinner as deputy monitoring officers for the city council in place of the head of legal and democratic services from 28 September 2010.

#### 3. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

The scrutiny officer presented the report summarising the key work carried out from September 2009 and up to 30 September 2010 by the monitoring officer.

In response to a question, the head of legal and democratic services said that the democratic services manager would be organising training on governance issues for each political group on a phased basis.

**RESOLVED** to endorse the annual report of the monitoring officer for submission to the council.

#### **4. THE FUTURE OF STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND AND THE STANDARDS FRAMEWORK**

The head of legal and democratic services presented the report updating the committee on the coalition government's proposals in relation to the future abolition of Standards for England and the standards framework. He referred, in particular, to the transition period following the abolition of the statutory regime, and the possibilities of the development of a local code of conduct and standards framework for the council in the future.

In response to a question, the head of legal and democratic services said that decisions regarding any local standards regime would be taken by the council. It was likely that officers would recommend that a local regime was developed on a similar basis to the statutory system.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

#### **5. STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

Members considered the committee's work programme for 2010-11. The scrutiny officer said that the development of a draft communications protocol for standards would be deferred pending developments arising from the Decentralisation and Localism Bill.

The head of legal and democratic services referred to future training requirements for members of the committee and suggested that it would be possible to organise a special training session on the standards referral system, pending the development of any local standards regime.

In response to a question, the monitoring officer said that there was no specific reference in the Decentralisation and Localism Bill to the role of the monitoring officer but that the Secretary of State had been given powers to make specific regulations which may affect the role in the future. The head of legal and democratic services referred to the possibility of the terms of office for independent members being extended during the transition from the statutory standards regime to any local code of conduct.

**RESOLVED** to note that the future items on the standards committee work programme would be deferred pending decisions regarding a local code of conduct and standards regime.

CHAIR