

THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND
Board Meeting

Board Room
4th Floor, Griffin House
40 Lever Street, Manchester, M1 1BB

Wednesday, 30 January 2008
11.00am – 2.30am

Meeting Minutes

Present Sir Anthony Holland, Chair
Patricia Hughes CBE, Deputy Chair
Councillor Beatrice Fraenkel
Paul Gott
Elizabeth Hall
Professor Judy Simons
Councillor Sir Ron Watson CBE

Apologies: Councillor Shirley Flint
Paul Gott
Councillor Mehboob Khan

In attendance: David Prince, Chief Executive
Tim Bogan, Head of Communications
Kathy Farrand, Head of Referrals/Programme Manager
Navin Gokool, Head of Governance and Client Services
Paul Hoey, Head of Policy and Guidance
Hazel Salisbury, Director of Casework
Sara Goodwin, Head of Legal

Observers: Clare Sydney, Communications Manager
Gary Hickey, Research and Practice Manager
Anne Rehill, Advice and Guidance Manager
Hannah Pearson, Policy Advisor
Glenys Stacey

ACTION

08/01 Apologies

Councillor Shirley Flint
Paul Gott
Councillor Mehboob Khan

08/02 Minutes of Board Meeting held on 14 November 2007 (Open Session)

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.

08/03 Matters Arising

07/104 – Corporate Plan; Strategic Plan 2008-2011, and Operational Plan 2008-2009.

It was reported that the Chief Executive and the Head of Policy and Guidance had met with the Department for Communities and Local Government in the previous week. Clarification was being sought by them on detailed aspects of the budget, particularly the provision for the part-year costs of the Referrals Unit. It was reported that they were content on the priorities. There would not be a ministerial meeting, and the formal approval was likely to be by letter.

08/04 Declaration of Board Member interests and forthcoming engagements

- Sir Anthony Holland
 - 7 February 2008 - Speaking at CALC (Cornwall Association of Local Councillors) in Truro
 - 28 March 2008 – Speaking at Independent Standards Committee Conference in Bristol
 - 4 April 2008 - Solicitors in Local Government – Annual dinner – Exeter
 - 6 and 26 February 2008 – meetings with Sir Christopher Kelly
- Judy Simons
 - Attended Derbyshire Dales Standards Committee as an observer
- Elizabeth Hall
 - Lay Chair of the Quality Assurance Panel of the Bar Standards Board

08/05 Team Briefing System

The report was noted, and it was agreed that the Team Briefing System worked well.

08/06 Communications Strategy

The Board considered and discussed the audiences, messages and activities described in the report, looking particularly at the new initiatives put forward.

It was agreed to support a standards committee award in principle. It was considered that this would help to raise the Board's profile and engage stakeholders.

It was also agreed that a further paper setting out options would be brought to the Board for consideration at the next meeting in March.

HoC

A Board and colleague conference was also discussed and it was again agreed in principle, noting that it would be unlikely to happen until July 2008 by when the new Chair should be confirmed and in post.

Future Roadshows were discussed and it was agreed that 2009 was the most appropriate date for the next series. It was noted that this would allow the local standards system to bed in and for problems and areas requiring change to have been identified by standards committees and monitoring officers. The Board noted that the planning process should start now and requested that a paper be brought to the July meeting, along with details for the 2009 Annual Assembly. The paper should consider the future relationship between the two.

HoC

It was noted that opportunities for exploiting positive press coverage should now be considered around the new strategic role, together with profiles of the new people joining the organisation.

HoC

08/07 Annual Assembly 2008

The Board noted that this year the strapline to be developed with marketing specialists would be, "Delivering the Goods – Local Standards in Action"

The Board agreed that it was timely to consider whether or not to hold an annual assembly, and in what form in 2009. It was agreed that the Head of Communications should bring a paper to the Board later in the year identifying options for the future shape of the Assembly, recognising the length of the lead time for these events.

HoC

The Board agreed it was important to have as many interactive sessions at this year's assembly as practicable, noting that these received the best feedback out of all of last year's sessions.

The Board discussed the need to identify part of the programme to deal with people's local concerns on a "surgery" basis. The Board agreed it would be useful to provide a drop-in session facility in a more structured setting than in previous year's information desk approach.

The fees and budget section of the report in paragraphs 12 – 14 were noted and the Board agreed a delegate fee of £430 for a two day attendance, and £320 for one day, both plus VAT.

08/08 Implementation of the Strategic Framework

The Board received a brief update and discussed the latest progress towards the issue of the regulations required and the accompanying Board guidance.

The progress on the new framework was noted.

It was noted that a report would be prepared for the March Board in relation to Ethical Standards Officers' Statutory Guidance in the context of legal advice generally, and this would be externally quality assured by a firm of solicitors or counsel.

HS

The Board considered and agreed the draft consultation response to the CLG paper "Orders and Regulations to the Conduct of Local Authority Members in England". The Board suggested that the wording around the 20 day response time should be strengthened. It was agreed to stress the importance of dealing with allegations as expeditiously as possible in the public interest.

PH

The Board requested a paper to come to the March 2008 Board meeting ahead of the next election period relating to guidance to be given on the due process of hearings and case handling during future election periods.

PH

The Board considered and agreed the consultation response on the issue of re-charging the costs of cases handled on behalf of an authority whose referral powers had been suspended.

The Board agreed with paragraph 66 allowing the withdrawal of references by Ethical Standards Officers to the Adjudication Panel.

Point 48 drawing attention to the publication of failure in relation to mediation was discussed. It was agreed that the wording around this should be clarified and strengthened to make clear the intention to members.

PH

The Board noted the progress with the electronic information return system.

The Board noted the progress on the production of guidance, which would be considered in detail at the Guidance and Support Panel on 12 February 2008.

The Board noted the new staff in policy and guidance.

08/09 Response to the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Area Assessment and key lines of enquiry on "use of resources"

The Board discussed the response and requested that the response urged the need to separate much more clearly and strongly the linking of fraud and ethical governance within the Audit Commission's proposals.

PH

It was agreed that the response would be further edited to strengthen the wording, separating out each of the points and expanding the related paragraphs further.

PH

The Board then agreed that the chair would clear the response and send a letter to the chair of the Audit Commission setting out our main points.

DP

08/10 Managing Diversity at the Standards Board for England

The Board approved the Diversity Equality Scheme for signature by the Chair and Chief Executive (Appendix 1). It was agreed that following Board sign off this document would be uploaded onto our internet site.

NG

The Board requested more detail on the implementation of this project and agreed that an update should be reported within the Corporate Services report to the next Board meeting in March.

NG

08/11 Referrals Unit – Closure Planning

The Board noted the content of the report and thanked the Referrals Team for all their continuing hard work and commitment in difficult circumstances.

08/12 Chief Executive's Report

The Board received the report.

The Board determined that the date of the meeting in May should remain as 21 May 2008 as originally agreed.

The Board then commented on, and agreed the agenda of the Board away day on 18 March 2008, shown in Appendix 3 of the report.

DP

08/13 Key Performance Indicators – report for the period April – December 2007

The Board noted the content of the report and appendix 1 which comprised KPI data to December 2007. The Board noted the pressures earlier in the year which had affected cumulative performance, and recognised that every effort was being made to achieve the KPIs. The earlier increase in allegations meant that the two referrals KPIs were

both under pressure, and the earlier software problems meant that the invoice payment KPI was unlikely to be formally met, even though in both cases recent performances had been high.

08/14 Corporate Services Report

The Board noted the report and also noted the Audit Committee minutes attached at Appendix 4 and 5.

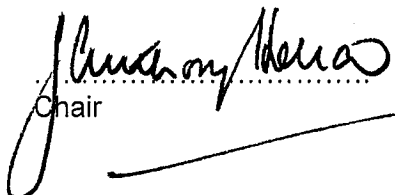
08/15 Report on Risk

The corporate risk register had been substantially reviewed and updated now that the relocation was almost completed. It was noted that the Audit Committee had reviewed and agreed the corporate risk register at their December 2007 meeting. The Board noted the content of the register and expressed their appreciation of all the work put into this.

08/16 –

08/20 The Board then went into closed session.

**The next meetings will be held as follows
Tuesday 18 March 2008 – away day
Wednesday 19 March 2008 - Board**


Chair