

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Thursday 24th July, 2008

PRESENT – *Councillors K Foster, A Graham, Hirst, and Humphrys*

PARISH COUNCIL MEMBER – *Councillor Malowana-Murphy*

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE – *Mr L Loft (Chair), Mrs M. Almond, Mr C. Brindle, Ms L. McEwan and Mrs V Webb*

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE- *Linda Comstive (Director of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer), Rabia Saghir (Solicitor, Legal Services) and Paul Jones Head of Democratic Services)*

RESOLUTIONS

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and received apologies for absence from Councillor Z. Khan.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 27th March 2008

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27th March 2008 be approved and signed as a correct record.

3 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

4 Role of the Standards Committee and Local Assessment of Complaints

A report was submitted which informed the Committee of guidance issued by the Standards Board for England (SBE) on the 'Role and Make-up of the Standards Committees', a copy of which was attached to the report.

The guidance covered the following issues:

- Functions of Standards Committees
- Size and Composition of Standards Committees
- Independent Members
- Parish Representatives
- Other Members of Standards Committees
- Supporting the Standards Committee
- Operation of the Standards Committee

To enable the Committee to fulfil its role and functions as described in the guidance from the SBE a draft work programme for 2008/09 was proposed.

The Director of Legal Services also reported on the potential risks facing the Council and Members when substitute members attended the Planning and Highways Committee. Although Planning and Legal officers supported Members when determining applications it would strengthen the Council's Governance Framework if was a requirement that any member attending Planning and Highways Committee as a substitute could only do so if they had undertaken the relevant training.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Guidance from the Standards Board for England be received.
2. That the Work Programme for 2008/09 be approved.
3. That this Committee supports the proposal from the Director of Legal Services to recommend that a member may only attend the Planning and Highways Committee as a substitute if they had undertaken the relevant training.

5 Procedures for Local Filter

A report was submitted on a Code of Practice for 'Monitoring Officer Investigations and the Local Assessment of Complaints about Members Conduct by the Standards Committee' together with guidance issued by the Standards Board for England (SBE).

Several minor amendments to the Code of Practice were considered by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Guidance from the Standards Board for England be received.
2. That the Code of Practice as amended at the meeting be adopted.

6 Membership of the Standards Committee

A report was submitted which made proposals on the future membership of the Standards Committee following the publication of the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008.

RESOLVED:

1. That this Committee supports the proposal to increase the membership of the Standards Committee to 8 Independent Members and 3 Parish Council representatives Members.

2. That the Monitoring Officer be requested to place advertisements on the Council Website, in the Shuttle, the local newspaper as appropriate and to contact the Local Councils Association to recruit additional members.

7 Standards Committee Annual Report April 2007 – April 2008 for Work Undertaken in Respect of the Code of Conduct

An Annual Report was submitted giving an update on the work undertaken on the matters effecting Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Standards Committee in respect of the Code of Conduct for the year April 2007 to April 2008.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report be approved.

8 Lancashire Standards Conference 2008

A report was submitted on the Lancashire Standards Conference that took place on 31st March 2008.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

10 Code of Conduct Training for Borough Members 21 May 2008

A report was submitted on the on the Code of Conduct Training which took place on 21st May 2008.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

11 Greater Manchester Authorities Administering the Code of Conduct Training for Standards Committee Members

A report was submitted on the on the Code of Conduct Training delivered by Eversheds on 25th June 2008.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

12 Summary of Responses - Consultation Paper on Orders and Regulations Relating to the Conduct of Local Authority Members in England

A report was submitted on the summary of responses to the consultation paper from the Department of Communities and Local Government on Orders and Regulations relating to the Conduct of Local Authority Members in England.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

13. Communications

Standards Board Bulletin: 38 & 39.

The newsletters were submitted for information. The Chair informed the Committee that he had written to Glenys Stacey, the new Chief Executive of the Standards Board for England extending to her an invitation to visit Blackburn with Darwen and meet members of this Committee.

Town and Parish Standard March 08

The newsletter was submitted for information.

Standards Board for England Annual Review 2007/08

A verbal report on the Standards Board Annual Review for 2007/08 was given.

Code of Conduct Training for Elected Members

A verbal report on the next training session for all Elected Members was given. The next session was scheduled to be held on 20th October 2008.

Code of Conduct Training for Parish Councils

A verbal report on the next training session for Parish Councillors was given. The next session was scheduled to take place during November 2008.

Standards Board for England: New Chairman

It was reported that Doctor Robert Chilton had been appointed as the new Chair of the Standards Board with effect from the 1st July 2008.

Case of Interest: Councillor Anthony Dunn, Wycombe District Council

The case was submitted for information.

14 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 9th October 2008.

Signed.....
Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were signed

Date.....