

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Thursday 26th March 2009

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

PARISH COUNCIL MEMBER – *Councillor Malowana-Murphy*

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE – *Mr L Loft (Chair), Mrs S Entwistle, Mr P Hodgkiss, Mr B Kiernan, and Mrs V Miles.*

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE- *Linda Comstive (Director of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer), Asad Laher (Senior Solicitor) and Paul Jones (Head of Democratic Services).*

RESOLUTIONS

42 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Z. Khan and Ms H Kaur-Kalkat .

43 Minutes of the Meetings of this Committee held on 8th January 2009

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 8th January 2009 be approved and signed as a correct record subject to the minutes being amended to show that Councillor Graham was not present.

44 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

45 Matters Arising

Update on Progress Developing Guidance for Members on the Declarations of Interests

At the last meeting of the Standards Committee it was resolved that the Chair of the Committee and the Monitoring Officer remind Members about the need to declare any hospitality and gifts during festive periods. A copy of a letter sent to all Members of the Council from the Chair of this Committee was submitted. Details of declarations made since the last meeting were given.

RESOLVED:

That the information be noted;

46 Training Update

A report was submitted updating the Committee on different training events being organised for elected representatives.

Induction Training for New Independent Members

Several new independent members had attended a session held on 15th January 2009. The session was conducted by Mike Henshaw (Deputy Head of Legal Services). The session had been organised to provide information on standards and the code of conduct. Feedback from the event was positive.

Local Complaints Procedure Training for the Standards Committee

On 26th February a session was held on the new responsibilities of this Committee under the new Local Assessment Framework to assist the Committee in understanding the practical delivery of its new responsibilities.

Slides used at both events were submitted together with a copy of the Local Code of Practise.

Arising from the sessions additional information had been requested on Appeals to the Adjudication Panel and censure. The Director of Legal Services gave a presentation on Appeals to the Adjudication Panel and an explanation of censure.

In response to a series of questions and comments the Director of Legal Services gave responses and made statements on the different matters raised.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the presentation from the Director of Legal Services be received with thanks

47 Minutes of a Hearing Sub Committee

The Minutes of a Hearing Sub Committee to consider the outcome of an investigation into a complaint made against a Councillor were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be approved.

48 Standards Board “Satisfaction with Advise and Guidance Research 2009

A report was submitted on a research exercise being undertaken by the Standards Board for England to assess the satisfaction of Local Government with the performance of the Standards Board For England.

Every two years the Standards Board for England assess the satisfaction of local government with its advice and guidance and attitudes to the ethical framework. The last survey was carried out on in 2007. For 2009 the Standards Board for England had again commissioned BMG Research to carry out the research on their behalf.

The Council had been invited to take part in the 2009 survey and has been asked to make arrangements for the completion and return of seven questionnaires; one by the Monitoring Officer and a further six questionnaires by Members of the Standards Committee and other Members of the Council. The selection of Members was carried out using recommendations made by BMG Research to ensure random selection.

In the 2007 survey a recommendation had been made to improve information to Councillors on standards matters and it was proposed that the existing arrangements for communicating standards information to elected members should be reviewed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted, and the proposal to review the existing arrangements for communicating standards information to elected members be approved.

49 Communications

Standards Board Bulletin: 42

The newsletter was submitted for information.

Annual Assembly of Standards Committee

The Committee was invited to nominate two delegates to attend the Annual Assembly on 12th and 13th October 2009 at the ICC Birmingham. One delegate would be an officer and the other a member of the Committee.

50 Date of Next Meeting

The next ordinary meeting would be held on Thursday 23rd July 2009.

51 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item in view of the fact that the business to be transacted is exempt by virtue of Paragraph 7 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

52 Verbal Report on Complaints

A verbal report was given on complaints.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

At the conclusion of the meeting a vote of thanks was given to the Chair for his leadership during the current Municipal Year.

Signed.....

Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were signed

Date.....