

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

HELD: 7 APRIL 2009

Start: 4.30pm

Finish: 5.20pm

PRESENT

Independent Members: J Cailes (Chairman)
P Hanmer (Vice Chairman)
P Hayman
R Patterson

Councillors Mrs Atherley
Rice
G M Roberts

Parish Councillors Cheetham
M Hammond
D Kitson

Officers: Council Secretary & Solicitor
Assistant Member Services Manager
Mr M Dudfield (Independent Adviser)

31. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Whitby and Independent Member Mr R Chester.

32. URGENT BUSINESS, IF ANY, INTRODUCED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no items of urgent business.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Atherley and G M Roberts and Parish Councillors Cheetham, Hammond and Kitson declared a personal interest in item 6 on the agenda 'Quality Parish Councils' as Members of a Parish Council.

34. MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 10 December 2008 were received as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

35. STANDARDS COMMITTEE COMPLAINTS

The Committee consider the current statistics regarding the number of Standards Committee complaints and the West Lancashire figures compared to the national figures produced by the Standards Board for England.

RESOLVED: That the statistics provided be noted.

36. QUALITY PARISH COUNCILS

The Committee considered the report of the Council Secretary and Solicitor which set out the current position in West Lancashire on Parish Councils achieving 'Quality Parish Council' status.

- RESOLVED:
- A. That the number of Parish Councils in West Lancashire who have Quality Parish Council status be noted.
 - B. That the contents of the letter to all Parish Clerks explaining the importance of good governance documents in the context of the maintenance of high standards, attached at Appendix 1, be noted.
 - C. That the Council Secretary and Solicitor ascertain which Parish Council's are working towards obtaining Quality Parish Council status at the next Parish Council Liaison Group meeting.

37. MEETING WITH THE STANDARDS BOARD - 18 MARCH 2009

The Council Secretary and Solicitor advised the Committee of a meeting she and the Chairman had attended with 3 representatives from the Standards Board for England and the Leader of the Council to discuss standards issues at the local level.

RESOLVED: That the meeting held with the Standards Board on 18 March 2009 be noted.

38. NEW CODES OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES

The Committee received an update from the Council Secretary and Solicitor who advised that the new codes for members and employees were due to be issued but had not yet been received.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

39. WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The Committee considered the updated work programme for the Standards Committee 2009/10, as contained on pages 189 to 190 of the Book of Reports.

- RESOLVED:
- A. That the work programme for 2009/10 be approved.
 - B. That the Code of Conduct Seminar for Officers, District and Parish Councillors be held in November 2009 at Edge Hill University.
 - C. That the list of dates for visits to Parish Councils be circulated to Members of the Committee to make arrangements for visits during Summer 2009.

40. MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES

The Committee considered the minutes of the Assessment Sub-Committee meetings held on 10 December 2008, 14 January and 26 February 2009 and the Review Sub-Committee meetings held on 10 December 2008 and 10 February 2009.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings be noted.

41. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 7C of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of that Act and as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption under Schedule 12A outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

(Note: Independent Member Mr P Hanmer (who was in the Chair for the next item), Councillor Rice, Parish Councillor Kitson, Independent Adviser Mr M Dudfield and the Assistant Member Services Manager remained in the room for consideration of the next item.)

42. LOCAL INVESTIGATION - LG5/6

The Committee considered the report of the Council Secretary and Solicitor, as contained on pages 203 to 227 of the Book of Reports, which presented a copy of the final report arising from the local investigation in respect of an allegation by Parish Councillor Brookfield that Parish Councillor David Westley may have failed to comply with Halsall Parish Council's/West Lancashire District Council's Code of Conduct.

- RESOLVED:
- A. That the Investigating Officer's finding that Parish Councillor Westley has not failed to comply with the Code of Conduct for Members, be accepted.
 - B. That the reasons for the finding be agreed as set out in the Notice of Finding.
 - C. That if the subject member does not object to publication of the Notice of Finding in the Local Newspaper, it is appropriate to publish the notice on the Council's website, but not in any other publication.

THE CHAIRMAN