

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

HELD: 14 JULY 2009

Start: 4.00pm

Finish: 4.55pm

PRESENT:

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

Councillors Mrs U Atherley
S Jones

Parish Councillors A Cheetham
R Coady
M Hammond

Officers: Council Secretary & Solicitor (Mrs G Rowe)
Assistant Member Services Manager (Mrs J Denning)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors T Rice and G M Roberts.

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

There were no items of urgent business.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES

The Council Secretary and Solicitor referred to an e-mail she had circulated providing feedback on those Parish Councils which were working towards Quality Parish Council status. This was attached as an Appendix to the minutes, in respect of Minute 36 of the Standards Committee meeting held in April 2009

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 19 May 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman and the e-mail attached as an Appendix to the minutes be noted.

5. COMPLAINTS, REVIEWS AND INVESTIGATIONS - STATISTICS

The Committee considered the statistics produced by the Council Secretary and Solicitor in respect of the number of complaints, reviews and investigations undertaken by members.

RESOLVED: That the current statistics be noted.

6. STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND - STATISTICS

The Committee considered the statistics produced by the Standards Board in respect of the composition of Standards Committees nationally, source of complaints, initial assessment decisions and investigation figures.

RESOLVED: That the national statistics produced by the Standards Board for England (SBE) be noted and that the SBE had now changed its name to Standards for England (SfE).

7. DECISION OF COUNCIL - 20 MAY 2009

The Committee considered Minute 11 of the Council meeting held on 20 May 2009 which detailed approvals in respect of the Standards Committee membership, appointment of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for 2009/10, appointment of Parish Councillor Coady and the establishment of the Consideration Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED: That Minute 11 of the Council meeting held on 20 May 2009 be noted.

8. RECRUITMENT OF NEW INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Committee considered the report of the Council Secretary and Solicitor which sought members views in respect of starting the process of inviting applications from those willing to become Independent Members of the Standards Committee, to interview them and select new Independent Members for appointment by Council who could start their training and then become future Independent Members when the relevant terms of office of existing Independent Members expire in May 2010.

RESOLVED: That the Council Secretary and Solicitor start the process of recruiting new Independent Members in early Autumn 2009.

9. STANDARDS BOARD INTERVENTION, JOINT STANDARDS COMMITTEES AND DISPENSATIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Council Secretary and Solicitor which set out the Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Regulations 2009 (SI 2009/1255). These Regulations came in force from 15 June 2009 and made provisions for the Standards Board for England to suspend the functions of a local Standards Committee (where the Committee is failing to perform its functions satisfactorily), gives powers to establish Joint Standards Committees and extends the power of Standards Committees to give dispensations to Members where they would otherwise be prohibited from participating on a matter because of a prejudicial interest.

RESOLVED: That the Council Secretary and Solicitor circulate a copy of the report to all members so that they are aware of the new provisions.

10. STANDARDS BOARD GUIDANCE ON 'OTHER ACTION'

The Committee considered the Guidance document produced by the Standards Board on 'Other Action'.

RESOLVED: That the Guidance document on 'Other Action' be noted.

11. CODE OF CONDUCT - MEMBERS' TRAINING - MONITORING

The Committee considered the report of the Council Secretary and Solicitor which detailed how Members could be trained in the requirements of the Code of Conduct and evaluated the effectiveness of the training undertaken to date.

RESOLVED: A. That the training undertaken and the evaluation of it be noted.

B. That a Seminar/Workshop on the Code of Conduct, for all Borough and Parish Councillors, be held in October/November 2009, to comprise of a presentation, followed by case studies in Workshop format, at a venue to be selected by the Council Secretary and Solicitor, in consultation with the Chairman of the Standards Committee.

C. That a refresher training workshop be provided to Standards Committee Members on the initial assessment, review and hearing processes in September 2009.

12. WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The Committee considered the revised Standards Committee work programme for 2009/10.

RESOLVED: That the work programme for 2009/10 be noted.

THE CHAIRMAN