

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

ITEM 4

HELD: 27 OCTOBER 2009
Start: 4.30pm
Finish: 5.45pm

PRESENT:

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

Councillors S Jones
G M Roberts

Parish Councillors R Coady
A Cheetham
M Hammond

Officers: Council Secretary & Solicitor (Mrs G Rowe)
Assistant Legal Services Manager (Mr M Jones) (for Minute No. 18)
Assistant Member Services Manager (Mrs J Denning)

In attendance: Leader, Councillor I Grant
Leader of the Opposition, Councillor P Cotterill
Chief Executive, Mr W Taylor

13. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Mrs Atherley.

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

There were no items of urgent business

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

16. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 14 July 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17. 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, investigations and hearings.

RESOLVED: That the current statistics be noted.

18. PROBITY IN PLANNING

The Committee considered the report of the Council Secretary and Solicitor which advised of the publication by the Local Government Association of an update to its guidance note "Probity in Planning".

RESOLVED: That the contents of the Local Government Association's update to its guidance note "Probity in Planning", be noted.

19. ETHICAL GOVERNANCE TOOLKIT

The Committee considered the report of the Council Secretary and Solicitor which advised of the Ethical Governance Toolkit produced by the IDeA and sought endorsement for a way forward for the Council.

RESOLVED: That, taking into account existing arrangements and how resource intensive undertaking the main elements of the Ethical Governance Toolkit could be, this matter should not be taken any further at present but the availability of the material be noted.

20. RECRUITMENT OF FUTURE INDEPENDENT MEMBERS - UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Council Secretary and Solicitor which provided an update in respect of the recruitment of Independent Members to the Standards Committee and the timetable for interviews.

RESOLVED: A. That the timetable for the recruitment of Independent Members to the Standards Committee, as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report, be noted, in particular, the short listing date of 10 December 2009 and the Interview date of 14 January 2010.

B. That the Notice advertising the positions of Independent Member, attached as an Appendix to the report, be noted.

C. That it be noted that the Recruitment of Independent Members Panel is likely to consist of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee and one other Independent Member.

21. VISITS TO BOROUGH AND PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Committee considered the report of the Council Secretary and Solicitor which provided an update on visits being undertaken by Members of the Standards Committee to Borough and Parish Council meetings.

Parish Councillor Hammond advised that he had also attended Up Holland Parish Council and that he would attend Lathom Parish Council on 25 January 2010.

Parish Councillor Cheetham advised that he would attend North Meols Parish Council on 8 December 2009.

- RESOLVED:
- A. That the current position in relation to visits to Borough and Parish Council meetings as set out in paragraph 4 of the report with the addition of the visit to Up Holland Parish Council and the informal feedback from Members on their visits to date, be noted.
 - B. That Members of the Committee notify the Assistant Member Services Manager of any future visits they are able to undertake.
 - C. That the programme of visits to the remaining Parish Councils, attached as an Appendix to the report, be updated to include Borough Council meetings.

22. STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND CONFERENCE - 12 & 13 OCTOBER 2009

The Council Secretary and Solicitor referred to the two day programme of the Standards for England Conference held on 12 and 13 October 2009 and advised that information on the programme was available to access via the web page.

RESOLVED: That the two day programme be noted.

23. THE STANDARDS FORUM

The Committee considered the report of the Council Secretary and Solicitor which advised of the introduction by Standards for England of an online Standards Forum and sought agreement to provide details to Standards for England of Standards Committee members who would like to join.

- RESOLVED:
- A. That the registration of the Council Secretary and Solicitor (Monitoring Officer) as a user of the Standards Forum be noted and the Legal Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer) also be registered as a user of the online Forum.
 - B. That nominations be sought from Members of the Standards Committee wishing to become 'registered users' of the on-line Forum and the details of those nominated be forwarded to Standards for England.

24. WEST LANCASHIRE AREA COMMITTEE OF PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS - 15 OCTOBER 2009

The Council Secretary and Solicitor advised the Committee that she had made a presentation on 15 October 2009 to West Lancashire Area Committee of Parish and Town Councils followed by a question and answer session which had been well received.

RESOLVED: That the comments of the Council Secretary and Solicitor be noted.

25. STANDARDS COMMITTEE TRAINING

The Committee discussed the 'Refresher Training – Local Assessment Procedure' session held on 16 October 2009 which had provided an opportunity to feedback on the experience members had gained since the new regime came into force.

The Chairman referred to a flowchart which had been produced for the training session which members had found useful and easy to follow.

RESOLVED: That the flowchart be circulated to those members who were not able to attend the session.

26. STANDARDS COMMITTEE 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 agreed.

27. THE IMPORTANCE OF ETHICAL GOVERNANCE AND THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09 - DISCUSSION

The Committee considered the report of the Council Secretary and Solicitor which invited members to discuss with the Chief Executive, the Leader and the Leader of the Opposition (a) the importance of Ethical Governance and (b) the Standards Committee Annual Report.

The Chief Executive, Mr W Taylor, the Leader, Councillor I Grant and the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor P Cotterill, addressed the Committee and thanked members of the Committee on behalf of the Council for the work undertaken, in particular the Independent Members. Comments were raised regarding:

- The number of local assessments etc undertaken by members, which had been dealt with very efficiently, and it was hoped that lessons had been learnt from all those involved particularly in view of the significant expense the Council had been required to incur in handling this volume.
- The importance and benefit of training for all Borough and Parish Council Members.
- The Annual Report and the work undertaken during 2008/09 to endorse the importance given to ethical governance at West Lancashire and commended the Committee on their proactive approach.

RESOLVED: That the discussion be noted and the contents of the Annual Report be agreed.

28. MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the following Sub-Committees be noted:

- A. Consideration Sub-Committee - 24 June 2009
- B. Hearings Sub-Committee – 21 July 2009
- C. Assessment Sub-Committee – 24 July 2009
- D. Review Sub-Committee – 23 September 2009

THE CHAIRMAN