

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on Thursday, 18 December, 2008 at 6.00 p.m. in the Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: A. Simpson (Independent Member - Chairman), Councillors A.J. Stanton (Vice-Chairman), R. Aveley, C.R.P. Mollett, U.E. Sambrook, K.S. Sahota and A.G.P. Williams
B. Bayley, F. Beasland and A. Selvaratnam (Independent Members). D. Edwards, R. Wickson and R. Williams (Parish Council representatives)

ST-17 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 9 October 2008 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

ST-18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors V.A. Fletcher and H. Rhodes. P.A. Picken (Parish Council representative)

ST-19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Parish Council representatives D. Edwards, R. Wickson and R. Williams declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda item 8 (Appendix F), recommendation 2.2

The Chairman agreed to hear this item at the beginning of the meeting. The Parish Council representatives all left the room for the duration of this item.

ST-20 STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND GUIDANCE ON THE ROLE AND MAKE-UP OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES

The report of the Interim Head of Legal Services informed Members of guidance issued by the Standards Board for England. In particular, the guidance concerned Independent members and Parish representatives serving on Standards Committees.

There was nothing in the guidance about the terms of office of Parish and Town Council representatives; however the Committee may take the view that it would be appropriate to have a consistent approach to Parish and Town Council representatives as is taken with Independent members of the Committee. The Committee were invited to establish the current terms of office of the serving Parish and Town Council representatives which would be as follows:-

- Councillor Roy Williams, term of office until 7th July 2011 representing eight years as a Parish Representative of the Committee
- Councillor Roy Wickson, term of office until 22nd January 2012 representing eight years as a Parish Representative of the Committee
- Councillor Pauline Picken, serving a term of office until 17th June 2012 (as agreed at the previous meeting of the Standards Committee) and representing the end of a first term of office and then subject to re-appointment
- Councillor David Edwards serving a term until 11th June 2012 (again as approved at a previous meeting of the Standards Committee) representing the end of a first term of office and then subject to re-appointment

RESOLVED –

a) that the contents of the report be noted.

b) that the Committee agree the Parish Council Representatives terms of office as shown below:

- **Councillor Roy Williams, term of office until 7th July 2011, representing eight years as a Parish Representative of the Committee**
- **Councillor Roy Wickson, term of office until 22nd January 2012, representing eight years as a Parish Representative of the Committee**
- **Councillor Pauline Picken, serving a term of office until 17th June 2012 (as agreed at the previous meeting of the Standards Committee) and representing the end of a first term of office and then subject to re-appointment**
- **Councillor David Edwards serving a term until 11th June 2012 (again as approved at a previous meeting of the Standards Committee) representing the end of a first term of office and then subject to re-appointment**

ST-21 CONSULTATION ON THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES

The report of the Interim Head of Legal Services informed the Committee that the Department for Communities and Local Government had issued a consultation paper suggesting proposed changes to the members' Code of Conduct as well as the introduction of a model employees' code of conduct which would be incorporated into local government employees' terms and conditions of employment. The Committee was asked to consider the

consultation document which was attached to the report at Appendix 2 and the proposed draft response which was attached to the report at Appendix 3.

The Head of Human Resources, welcoming the consultation document, informed Members that the Council had already successfully produced an Employee of Conduct. He felt that the proposals for two codes for employees and qualifying employees was unnecessary as one code could adequately cover all employees. In response to questions, he confirmed that the model code would ultimately be enshrined in the contracts of employees and that the code would also cover Parish Councils.

RESOLVED – That the consultation response, at Appendix 3 of the report, subject to the amendments agreed to by the Committee, be submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government in response to their consultation document.

ST-22 STANDARDS COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

The report of the Interim Head of Legal Services informed the Committee of the progress made in preparing a Standards Committee Members Handbook and sought the Committee's views on documents to be included. A draft index for the Handbook was attached to the report.

RESOLVED – that the Committee approve the Index for the Standards Committee Members Handbook.

ST-23 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT TRAINING

The report of the Interim Head of Legal Services informed the Committee about the recent Member Code of Conduct Training sessions, held on 12 November 2008. Feedback from those attending the session confirm that there were problems with the training and it was not as successful as in previous years. Guidance was sought from the Committee as to how the training could be improved.

A number of Members felt that the main problem with the recent training session was the quality of presentation. A number of Members commented that they strongly preferred the previous training presenter as he had interacted well with those attending the session. The Group Solicitor reported that quotations had been received from training providers and that cost was a significant issue. One suggestion was that Parish Councils be charged a training fee. It was also suggested that the training could be provided using the expertise available within the Council. The Group Solicitor agreed to investigate the options available and report back to the Committee.

RESOLVED – that the Group Solicitor investigates the training options available and brings a report back to the Committee.

ST-24 ANNUAL REVIEW OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The report of the Interim Head of Legal Services provided details of the Terms of Reference and the role and function of the Standards Committee, as contained in the Council's Constitution, for review by the Committee. The Standards Committee reviews its Terms of Reference annually. There had been a number of changes to the Terms of Reference within the last few months and the Committee were asked to consider these changes and make any recommendations for further changes as appropriate.

Members considered and reviewed the changes made and had no further recommendations at the current time.

RESOLVED – that the Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee be agreed

ST-25 CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS MADE TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE - QUARTERLY UPDATE: 1ST JULY TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2008.

The report of the Interim Head of Legal Services provided the Committee with details of the Code of Conduct complaints received by the Standards Committee during the period 1 July 2008 to 30 September 2008.

From 1 July to 30 September 2008 the Standards Committee received one Code of Conduct complaint under the new system for local assessment. A quarterly return had been forwarded to the Standards Board for England.

RESOLVED – that the contents of the report be noted

The meeting ended at 6.55 pm

Chairman:

Date: