

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held on Thursday, 16 June, 2011 at 6.00 p.m. at Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors S. Davies and C.B.A. Elliott;
Mr F. Beasland and Mr A. Selvaratnam (Chair) (Independent Members);
Councillors P. Fairclough and R. Wickson (Parish Council representatives)

ST-1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR 2011/12

In accordance with the statutory requirements, the Chairman had to be an Independent Member of the Committee. It was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED - that Mr A Selvaratnam be elected Chair of the Standards Committee for the 2011/12 Municipal Year.

ST-2 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 10 March 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

ST-3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors T.J. Hope, M.B. Hosken, A.D. McClements, R.J. Sloan and A.J. Stanton
Councillors D. Edwards and R. Williams (Parish Council representatives)

ST-4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair stated that neither himself nor Mr Beasland would take part in discussion or voting on the re-appointment of Independent Members of the Committee contained within Agenda item 6 – Annual Report of the Standards Committee and General Update

ST-5 ANNUAL REVIEW OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Head of Governance & Monitoring Officer presented a report which asked the Committee to consider whether any amendments were required to its terms of reference, and to make any recommendations for further changes as appropriate.

Two minor changes to the Terms of Reference were proposed:

- i) to change the elected membership number to “up to eight elected members” to reflect the current political balance;

- ii) change references to Standards Board to England to “Standards for England” to reflect the current operating name of the Standards Board..

RESOLVED – that the changes to the terms of reference proposed by the Monitoring Officer, as shown at paragraph 5.1.4 of the report, be approved.

ST-6 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE AND GENERAL UPDATE

(Mr Selvaratnam and Mr Beasland did not take part in the discussion or vote on resolution (d) below).

The Head of Governance & Monitoring Officer presented a draft version of the annual report of the Standards Committee for approval. A copy was attached to the agenda.

The draft annual report also contained a proposed work programme for 2011/12. During consideration of the work programme, it was suggested that a further training session on the Members Code of Conduct could be arranged for Parish members. This would provide an opportunity for both newly elected Parish Councillors as well as those who had not previously attended previous training events. The Monitoring Officer advised that he would write to Parish and Town Clerks to advise them of the intention to organise a training event later in the year.

In terms of Committee membership and appointments, the Head of Governance & Monitoring Officer reported that all members of the Committee should be formally appointed to the sub-committees and hearing panel. In relation to the two remaining Independent members on the Committee, their terms of office were due to expire. Standards for England had recently changed their guidance concerning terms of office of independent members, and it was proposed that both Mr Selvaratnam and Mr Beasland be re-appointed until such time as the Committee recommended otherwise – as a result of developments relating to the provisions of the Localism Bill. In respect of Councillor Roy Williams, his second term of office as a parish representative would expire on 7 July 2011, and the Committee were asked to consider whether to reappoint Cllr Williams for a further period.

The Head of Governance & Monitoring Officer also reported on developments concerning the future of the ethical framework contained within the Localism Bill. These included the abolition of Standards for England, the revocation of the mandatory model code of conduct for Members, authorities would no longer be required to establish a Standards Committee, and new regulations would create criminal offences for failure by a member to register or disclose certain interests. It was expected that the new provisions would be in force by around April 2012. During the ensuing discussion, Members expressed the view that some form of ethical framework should continue to operate, and that views from Parish Councils and others could be sought regarding the

proposed new legislative provisions and subsequent new regime. For example, the Telford & Wrekin Parish Forum could be consulted and invited to express a view.

RESOLVED –

- (a) that the draft version of the annual report of the Standards Committee be approved, subject to the inclusion in the 2011/12 work programme of a training event for parish and town councillors;
- (b) that the appointment of all members of the Committee to the Referrals, Review and Dispensation Sub-Committees and the Hearing Panel be confirmed;
- (c) that the Monitoring Officer invite views and comments from Borough and Parish/Town Councillors regarding the future ethical framework in Telford & Wrekin (in the light of the proposals contained in the Localism Bill), and that a report then be brought to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration;
- (d) **TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that Mr Frank Beasland and Mr Arul Selvaratnam be appointed independent members of the Standards Committee from the expiry of their second and first terms respectively for an indefinite period, pending developments relating to the provisions of the Localism Bill;
- (e) that Councillor Roy Williams be re-appointed as a Parish Council representative on the Standards Committee.

The meeting ended at 6.25 pm

Chairman:

Date: