

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
5 JUNE 2008**

Present: Independent members: -  
Mr V Kempner (in the Chair)  
Mrs S Fellows

Councillors Bird, Daniel, Martin, Roberts and Silverson

Apologies were received from Councillor Fawthrop

**1. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2008 be approved and signed by the chair as a correct record.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

**3. LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS ALLEGING BREACH OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer presented a report which looked at making provision for new arrangements of complaints alleging breach of conduct by members of the Council.

The changes were required to give effect to the new duties imposed on Standards Committees by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, concerning the local assessment of complaints.

Members discussed how best to publicise the complaints procedure to residents, suggesting there be regular notices in the About magazine, alongside press releases in the local newspapers.

Concerns were raised about how complaints could be made. Members felt that all complaints should be made in writing, regardless of whether they ultimately resulted in Standards Committee action, or remained informal.

Members discussed the necessity for a clear audit trail and the future reporting of complaints to the Standards Board for England.. They also looked at how availability of members was managed within the general pool.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously) that:

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- 1. the arrangements and procedures as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved;**
- 2. two sub-committees be appointed, called the Assessment Sub-committee and the Review Sub-committee, each with an independent chair and two elected members of the Council, to be drawn from the pool of members of Standards Committee;**
- 3. authority be delegated to the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer to agree any necessary changes to Appendix A in consultation with the Chair of Standards Committee; and**
- 4. Council be recommended to delegate to the Monitoring Officer authority to appoint independent persons to the Standards Committee on a temporary basis in relation to particular complaints, from persons serving as independent members on other authorities' Standards Committees.**

**4. THE ROLE AND MAKE UP OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer presented a report which detailed guidance from the Standards Board for England on Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008. Standards Committees were required to have regard to Standards Board guidance by the Local Government Act 2000.

Some members felt that the involvement of an Executive member (paragraph 14 of the report) was not necessarily beneficial to Standards Committee. It was considered, however, that Standards Committee could be linked with Audit Committee successfully. They also stressed the advantages of politically balanced committees.

Members asked for an annual report to be brought before the committee on all complaints made within the year. This would enable the committee to gauge the numbers of complaints made and concerning what issues.

The committee also felt that the extra functions mentioned in paragraph 8 of the report should not have Standards Committee involvement, as current processes worked adequately well.

**RESOLVED (unanimously) that:**

- 1. the Standards Board Guidance be noted; and**

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- 2. that Council is recommended to agree amendment to the terms of reference of the Committee to include the functions set out in paragraphs 3 and 12 of the report.**

**5. CODE OF CONDUCT TRAINING**

The Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer presented a report which informed members of the level of attendance of members at training on the Code of Conduct. Training was seen to be important to support member understanding and compliance with the Code of Conduct.

Members asked that the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer gather information on those councillors who had not undertaken any training on the revised Code of Conduct. They suggested that an email be sent by the Chair of Standards Committee to the leaders of the political groups on the Council identifying those members, who have not attended training on the revised Code of Conduct.

**RESOLVED (unanimously) that:**

- 1. the report be noted; and**
- 2. the Committee strongly recommends that Members and Co-opted members attend the training planned for 1 July 2008.**

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 6.55pm)