

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

10.00 A.M.

23RD MAY 2008

PRESENT:- Councillors Jon Barry, Roger Dennison, Sheila Denwood, Janie Kirkman, Roger Sherlock and Joyce Taylor

Independent Members: Stephen Lamley (Chairman), Margaret Davy, Paul Gardner, Tony James, David Jordison, Sue McIntyre, Susan O'Brien and Frank Senior

Officers in attendance:-

Sarah Taylor
Suzanne Smith

Monitoring Officer
Senior Democratic Support Officer

1 WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed new Members and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

The Chairman explained that if there was sufficient time at the end of the meeting then a training session would be held for all Members of the Committee and that papers had previously been circulated for this training.

2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2008/09

It was noted that Stephen Lamley had been re-appointed as Chairman of the Standards Committee by the Council for 3 years from May 2008.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2008/09

It was proposed by Councillor Sherlock and seconded by Councillor Kirkman that Tony James be appointed Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2008/09.

Resolved:

That Tony James be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee for the Municipal year 2008/09.

4 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24th January 2008 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

5 TRAINING OF PARISH COUNCILLORS

The Monitoring Officer presented a report reminding Members that training sessions had been provided for city and parish councillors and the Committee had previously resolved that the issue of training for Parish Councils be considered at a future meeting.

It was suggested that training should be provided for groups of 3-4 parishes and held in the local area rather than coming into the city centre. It was recognised that Parish

clerks do attend training events already. It was also suggested that a training session for City Councillors could be held prior to full Council.

Resolved:

- (1) That parish councils be given the option for training to be provided for groups of 3-4 parishes and held in the local area.
- (2) That a future training session for city councillors be held prior to a full Council meeting.

6 REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS

Members received a report outlining the progress made by the Monitoring Officer to ensure that all city and parish councillors register their personal interests as required by the Code of Conduct.

It was reported that there was an obligation to notify of any changes within 28 days and that in order to ensure that their registrations were up to date all city councillors had been asked recently to submit a change form or a declaration that there had been no change since the last form was completed following the May 2007 elections.

It was reported that there were just four outstanding registration forms to be received from parish councillors. Parish clerks had been asked to remind their councillors of the need to register any changes and also of the requirement to register any beneficial interest in land within the parish which meant that home addresses were likely to be required to be registered.

The Monitoring Officer was thanked for her efforts.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

7 LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS

Members received a report advising of the new Regulations in place to deal with the local assessment of complaints. Three additional documents were circulated at the meeting in addition to the supplementary agenda that was published before the meeting containing revised guidance from the Standards Board. The Monitoring Officer reported that she had attended a meeting recently with other Lancashire Monitoring Officers with the aim to create a common set of referral criteria.

Members discussed the method for publicising the new regime and how to gain the balance of promoting it without soliciting for complaints. Members supported the issue of a press release, publicity through the City Council's Customer Service Centre, libraries and parish newsletters and noticeboards and promoting to organisations like Citizens Advice Bureau and the universities. It was suggested that the Standards Board template press release circulated at the meeting should be re-written to be more user friendly, readable and possibly include an interview and photo.

Members considered the draft complaints form and additional guidance for complainants circulated at the meeting and indicated a preference for the form to be simplified, with all the narrative being contained in the guidance notes. Members were of the view that the subject member should not be notified that a complaint had been received until after the Assessment Sub-Committee had met.

Members considered the amended Assessment Procedure and Criteria circulated at the meeting, and took the view that the Assessment and Review Sub-Committees should comprise three members, convened by the Head of Democratic Services on an ad-hoc basis in accordance with the principles set out in the report and the draft Assessment Procedure. Members were further of the view that the Review Sub-Committee should consider a complaint afresh, substituting its own view for that of the Assessment Sub-Committee.

Resolved:

- (1) That the revised guidance from the Standards Board be noted and adopted.
- (2) That the new regime be publicised through the City Council's Customer Service Centres, libraries and parish newsletters and noticeboards, and organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux and the universities, and via the issue of a press release to be written in consultation with the Council's Communications officers to be more user friendly, readable and if possible include an interview and photo.
- (3) That authorisation be given to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chairman, to finalise the format of the complaints form and guidance.
- (4) That the Assessment Procedure and Assessment Criteria as circulated and discussed at the meeting be approved.
- (5) That the Review Sub-Committee will consider a complaint de novo, substituting its own view for that of the Assessment Sub-Committee.
- (6) That the Monitoring Officer will not notify the subject member in advance of the meeting of the Assessment Sub-Committee that a complaint has been received.
- (7) That the Assessment and Review Sub-Committees should consist of three members, to include an independent member as Chairman, and one city councillor. The third member will be a parish representative where the complaint relates to a parish councillor, and, where the complaint relates to a city councillor, the third member will either be another independent member or a parish representative. Wherever possible, the city councillor will not be of the same Group as the subject member and/or the maker of the complaint.
- (8) That the Head of Democratic Services or her representative be authorised to convene ad hoc Assessment and Review Sub-Committees on the principles set out in (7) above.

- (9) That a future meeting of the Committee consider a review of the existing Hearing procedures, a review of the Protocol on publicity for complaints, and the procedure for dealing with complaints of alleged breach of Protocols.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 11.27 a.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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