

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

10.00 A.M.

23RD FEBRUARY 2007

PRESENT:- Councillors Keith Budden, David Kerr, Janie Kirkman and Roger Sherlock
Sarah Fishwick (substitute for Roger Mace)
Independent Members Stephen Lamley (Chairman), Tony James and
Fiona Humphreys (LAPTC)

Apologies for Absence

Councillors Roger Mace, Gina Dowding and John Harrison
Independent Members Sue McIntyre

Officers in attendance:-

Sarah Taylor	Head of Legal and Human Resources and Monitoring Officer
Gillian Noall	Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
James Doble	Principal Democratic Support Officer

5 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 13th September 2007 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

It was noted that the proposed training of Parish Councils would be left until after the election.

6 CONSULTATION ON AMENDMENTS TO THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS

The Committee considered the report which set out the government's draft revised Code of Conduct which was the subject of consultation.

The Chairman outlined that due to several court cases, the publication of the draft revised Code of Conduct had been delayed, and this meant that it was unlikely that the final version would be issued in time for it to be adopted by the Council before the May elections. Members would therefore be required to sign up to the current Code even though it would shortly be superseded, and would have to receive training both on the existing code and the new code.

With regard to the disclosure of confidential information, it was agreed that it would be helpful for guidance to include information on the capacity of Councillors to challenge the classification of documents as confidential.

With regard to the conduct of Councillors whilst 'off duty' it was suggested that it would be helpful for there to be clarification as to whether this was restricted to just criminal issues or wider.

The Committee welcomed the removal of the obligation on Members to report breaches of the Code of Conduct, and also the amendment which would restrict the disclosure of interests relating to a family member or friend to those interests of which the Member is aware or ought reasonably to be aware.

Members were of the view that the £25 threshold in terms of gifts and hospitality was no longer realistic and that this should be raised to £100.

It was agreed that these comments, together with the comments of the Monitoring Officer set out in the report, should be forwarded by way of a response to the consultation.

Resolved unanimously:

That the Monitoring Officer respond on behalf of the Standards Committee to the consultation including the issues as set out above.

7 MEMBER INDUCTION AND TRAINING

The Committee was informed that, following the elections in May, there would be two Induction Days, when new Members would receive a general introduction and overview of the Council. This would be followed by more detailed training sessions on the Code of Conduct for all Members, and specific training for members of the Standards Committee. Independent Members of the Standards Committee agreed where possible to be available for these sessions, as it was felt that their presence would raise the profile of the Committee, and would give a useful perspective for new Members.

It was noted that arrangements would be made through the Lancashire Association of Town and Parish Councils (and directly with other parishes that do not belong to the Association), with a view to arranging for the Monitoring Officer and independent members of the Standards Committee to provide training on the revised Code of Conduct.

Resolved unanimously:

That the report be noted, and that the Independent members of the Committee have input to the induction and training process wherever possible.

8 PROCEDURE FOR CONSIDERING REPORTS ON INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED BREACHES OF COUNCIL PROTOCOLS

Members considered the report of the Monitoring Officer.

Resolved unanimously:

That the procedure adopted by the Committee for considering reports on investigations relating to alleged breaches of Council Protocols be similar to the statutory procedure for considering reports on investigations initiated by the Standards Board.

9 UPDATE ON WORKLOAD OF STANDARDS BOARD AND LOCAL CASES

The Monitoring Officer provided Members with an update on the caseload of the Standards Board nationally which was slightly down on the previous year, and on local cases. In the course of discussion the Committee questioned the degree to which the number of cases referred for investigation by the Standards Board reflected the resources available as opposed to the merits of the case.

Resolved unanimously:

That the report be noted.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 11.09 a.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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