

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

10.00 A.M.

21ST JANUARY 2010

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

Independent Members Stephen Lamley (Chairman), Tony James and Sue McIntyre

Parish Council Representatives Susan O'Brien and Frank Senior

### Apologies for Absence

Councillors Sarah Fishwick and Ian McCulloch  
Independent Member David Jordison  
Parish Council Representatives Margaret Davy and Paul Gardner

### Observer

Councillor Malcolm Thomas

### Officers in attendance:-

Sarah Taylor	Head of Legal and Human Resources and Monitoring Officer
Suzie Smith	Senior Democratic Support Officer

## 19 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2009, were agreed as a true and accurate record.

## 20 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were none.

## 21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

## 22 WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

The Committee considered the report of the Monitoring Officer which provided an annual update on the operation of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy. It was reported that the Policy was relaunched to employees following consideration by the Committee at its meeting in January 2009 and during the year only one concern had been lodged and this was anonymous. It was explained that it was difficult to know if concerns were not being raised because there was nothing to raise or whether employees were reluctant to raise concerns.

The Committee discussed whether it was appropriate for concerns to be investigated by

the relevant service director or manager, and whether this was a factor in concerns not being raised. It was suggested that it could be more appropriate for an officer not directly relevant to the complainant to conduct the investigation.

**Resolved:**

1. To note the report.
2. That where possible, matters raised under the Whistleblowing Policy should be referred for investigation by an independent officer.

**23 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received a report updating Members on the progress of the current work programme.

It was reported that no further information was available about the proposed revised Code of Conduct and no further training was planned at this stage, but that in February a number of members would be attending training by Standards for England, arranged by South Lakeland District Council, on conduct issues relating to "dual-hatted" members. Members received an update from the Chairman upon the recent meeting of the Dispensations Sub-Committee in dealing with a request for dispensations from parish councillors. The Monitoring Officer reported that the results of the Ethical Governance Survey were being analysed and would be reported upon at the next Committee meeting.

**Resolved:**

To note the progress with the current work programme.

**24 STANDARDS COMMITTEE HEARINGS - PUBLIC NOTICES**

The Committee considered a report of the Monitoring Officer setting out the concerns of Wyre Borough Council's Standards Committee about the requirement to publish a notice in a local newspaper following a hearing and in particular the cost of such requirement. The Monitoring Officer explained that this had not been a concern of this Committee before as there had been no hearings.

Members were reminded that there was a requirement to publish a notice of the finding in at least one newspaper and if considered appropriate on the web page of the authority concerned and any other publication.

Members discussed the concerns of Wyre Borough Council and the expense of public notices but recognised the importance in terms of openness and transparency of publishing a notice in a local newspaper.

**Resolved:**

To note the concerns of Wyre Borough Council's Standards Committee, but to advise Wyre that the Committee does not support its stance.

**25 REVIEW OF THE PROTOCOL ON MEMBER/OFFICER RELATIONS**

The Committee considered a report reviewing the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations. It was reported that the Monitoring Officer had made some suggested amendments to the Protocol and these were appended to the report. The most substantial amendments were on access to information and enabling members requests for information to be dealt with without the need for a separate Freedom of Information request to be made.

Members considered the proposed amendments and felt that the Protocol had become much clearer and thanked the officers involved in preparing this.

***Resolved:***

To recommend the Council Business Committee approve the revised Protocol on Member/Officer Relations for inclusion in the Council's Constitution.

**26 DVD - ASSESSMENT MADE CLEAR - LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS**

Members watched a dvd from Standards for England on Assessment Made Clear – Local Assessment of Complaints. The dvd was to help Standards Committee Members and Local Authority officers involved in assessment of complaints and looked at the four stages of the assessment process; pre-assessment, assessment, decision and review.

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Chairman

(The meeting ended at 11.30 a.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
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