

Standards Committee

Thursday, 5 March 2009

Present: Tony Ellwood (Independent Chair), Councillor Keith Iddon (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Judith Boothman, Thomas McGowan, Debra Platt, Stella Walsh and Rev John Cree (Independent Member)

Officers in attendance: Andrew Docherty (Director of Governance - Monitoring Officer), Chris Moister (Legal Services Manager) and Ruth Rimmington (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Also in attendance: Councillor Alan Cornwell (Reserve Parish Council Member)

09.S.68 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Joan Geddes (Parish Council representative).

09.S.69 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 11 December 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

09.S.70 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

In accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and Members Code of Conduct, Councillor Debra Platt declared an interest in relation to items 8: Update on the recruitment of additional members of the Standards Committee and 10: Appointment of Sub-Committee. Councillor Keith Iddon declared an interest in relation to item 10: Appointment of Sub-Committee.

09.S.71 NEWS FROM THE STANDARDS BOARD

The Monitoring Officer advised that the Local Government Chronicle had recently held some awards on standards and ethics. Examples of good practice from those commended authorities could be considered by the Committee in future.

RESOLVED – The report be noted.

09.S.72 CASES CONSIDERED BY THE ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR ENGLAND

The Committee considered the report of the Monitoring Officer advising Members of recent cases which have been considered nationally.

The Committee discussed the cases and queried several points with the Monitoring Officer.

RESOLVED - The report be noted.

09.S.73 FEEDBACK FROM VISITS TO PARISH COUNCILS

Members of the Committee gave feedback on their visits to Parish Councils. It was noted that each Parish would have received a visit from their mentor by the end of April and that visits do raise awareness of the Committee and its' role.

RESOLVED - The report be noted.

09.S.74 WORK UNDERTAKEN TO PROMOTE THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Monitoring Officer advised that Parish Council clerks would now receive an email alert notifying when an agenda for the Committee was published.

Members would be requested to review their register of financial and other interest forms in May. The membership of Parish Councils would be confirmed in June and at this point the parish register of financial and other interest forms would also be reviewed by officers to ensure all forms had been received.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the quarterly return to the Standards Board for England had been completed and that the annual return would be reported to the next meeting.

The Committee's response to the consultation paper "Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power Codes of Conduct for Local Authority Members and Employees" had been submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

09.S.75 UPDATE ON THE RECRUITMENT OF ADDITIONAL MEMBERS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Councillor Debra Platt declared a personal interest in this item.

The Monitoring Officer advised that, following an interview process, two candidates were considered to be suitable to be appointed as Parish Council representatives on the Standards Committee.

He advised that the Independent member appointment process had been discussed at All Party Leaders Liaison and a suggestion had been made to contact the Local Strategic Partnership to canvass interest. It was noted that the majority of Councils have faced difficulties in appointing Independent Members due to the voluntary nature of the post.

RESOLVED –

- 1. The Council be recommended to appoint Parish Councillors Bill Mason and Alan Platt to the Standards Committee,**
- 2. The update on Independent member vacancies be noted.**

09.S.76 DRAFT PROTOCOL ON PARISH MEMBER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Monitoring Officer and sought Members comments on the draft protocol. Comments from Debra Platt and Joan Geddes had already been fed into the document enclosed with the agenda package.

The Committee supported the protocol as a guide for parish councillors in their role. The voluntary nature of the protocol was noted.

RESOLVED -

- 1. To make the protocol available to Parishes within Chorley to be adopted on a voluntary basis.**
- 2. To consider the Borough Member officer protocol at a future meeting.**

09.S.77 APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEES

Councillors Debra Platt and Keith Iddon declared a personal interest in this item.

It was noted that a case involving a Lancashire County Councillor, who was also a Borough Councillor, would be dealt with by Lancashire County Council.

RESOLVED -

- 1. That the membership of the Standards Sub-Committee (Assessment) be Tony Ellwood (Independent Member), Alan Cornwell (Parish Council representative) and Stella Walsh (Borough Councillor).**
- 2. That the membership of the Standards Sub-Committee (Hearing) be Tony Ellwood (Independent Member), Thomas McGowan and Stella Walsh (Borough Councillors).**

09.S.78 USE OF RESOURCES

The Committee received a presentation from the Monitoring Officer entitled "Use of Resources Assessment – What the Standards Committee needs to know".

The Committee discussed whether the Borough and Parish Councillor financial and other interests forms should be available on the internet. It was considered that as personal information is included on the forms which are available for inspection in the Democratic Services office the forms should not be available on the internet.

The Committee considered its' effectiveness in overseeing compliance with the code of conduct. The work programme and taking the role of the Committee forward for next year would be considered at the next meeting.

RESOLVED –

- 1. The presentation be noted.**
- 2. The work programme be considered at the next meeting along with points such as:**
 - How do we demonstrate that the leadership of the Council promotes ethical standards?**
 - Being outward facing – how much do we want to encourage people to bring complaints?**
 - How do we get long standing members to training?**

09.S.79 STANDARDS COMMITTEE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received and considered the draft Annual Report for the Standards Committee.

Members thanked the Monitoring Officer for the report and noted how active the Committee is, in particular regarding Parish Council mentoring.

RESOLVED –

- 1. The Annual Report be presented to Council.**
- 2. An Annual Report be produced at the end of each municipal year.**

09.S.80 STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee discussed the work programme and noted that the dates of the meetings for the next municipal year were 18 June 2009, 17 September 2009, 10 December 2009 and 4 March 2010. The work programme would be considered at the first meeting of the new municipal year.

RESOLVED – The work programme be noted.

Chair