

Standards Committee

Thursday, 9 December 2010

Present: Tony Ellwood (Independent Chair), Councillor Debra Platt (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Marie Gray, Laura Lennox, Stella Walsh, Hugh Evans (Independent Member), Gwynne Furlong (Independent Member), Eileen McGhee (Parish Council Representative), Bill Mason (Parish Council representative) and Tony Wilson (Parish Council Representative)

Officers in attendance: Chris Moister (Head of Governance / Monitoring Officer) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

10.S.157 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Judith Boothman.

10.S.158 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No declarations of any interest were declared.

10.S.159 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 16 September be held as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

10.S.160 NEWS FROM STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND

The Monitoring Officer circulated information that had been received by the Council on the future proposals regarding the abolition of the Standards Board regime.

It was reported that subject to Parliament approving the necessary legislation, the changes would be as follows:

- The Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001, which sets out the principles which govern the conduct of members and co-opted members of relevant authorities in England and police authorities in Wales be revoked.
- The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 which prescribes the model code of conduct to apply to members of relevant authorities, will be revoked.
- The requirement for local authorities to have standards committees will be abolished.
- Standards for England (formally known as the Standards Board for England) will be abolished. Established by the Local Government act 2000 and the regulator for local authority standards committees, the Standards Board requires primary legislation to abolish it and its legislative functions. None of the Standards Boards functions will be transferred to other bodies.
- The First-tier Tribunal (Local Government Standards in England), the independent judicial tribunal established as a disciplinary body to hear and determine references and appeals concerning the conduct of local authority councillors, will lose its jurisdiction over the conduct of local authority members.

It is intended to effect the abolition of the Standards Board regime through the Localism Bill. It is anticipated that the Bill would be laid before Parliament in December and would receive Royal Assent in late 2011.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

10.S.161 CASES UPDATE

The Monitoring Officer presented a verbal report outlining recent cases which had been considered nationally.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10.S.162 THE NUMBER OF ALLEGATIONS RECEIVED AND ASSESSED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE SINCE THE LAST MEETING.

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10.S.163 FEEDBACK FROM VISITS TO TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

Members updated the Committee on their visits to Parish Councils. The feedback was positive and the visits achieved the aim of raising awareness of the Committee and its role.

The remaining two Parish Councils would be allocated to the newly appointed Member of the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED 1. That the schedule recording the visits to Parish Councillors be updated, including Committee Members who were not present at the meeting.

2. That the Democratic and Member Services Officer would provide the details of the remaining two Parish Council to the newly appointed Member of the Standards Committee.

10.S.164 WORK UNDERTAKEN TO PROMOTE THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Monitoring Officer provided a verbal report of the Code of Conduct for Parish Councillors training session that had taken place on 8 December 2010. Seven parish councillors/clerks had attended the session and the feedback had been extremely positive.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

10.S.165 STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee discussed the Work Programme and following the recent news that the Standards Board regime was to be abolished the Committee decided to consider an alternative proposal that could be submitted to the Executive Cabinet on a local alternative.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be amended.

Chair