

Standards Committee

Monday, 23 October 2006

Present: Mr Ellwood (Chair), Councillor Thomas Bedford (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Thomas McGowan and Rev Cree

Officers in attendance: Andrew Docherty (Director of Customer, Democratic and Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)), Ruth Hawes (Assistant Democratic Services Officer) and Dianne Scambler (Trainee Democratic Services Officer)

06.S.01 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The recently appointed Director of Customer, Democratic and Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, Andrew Docherty, was introduced to the Committee.

06.S.02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mrs Joan Geddes and Councillors Alan Cain and Keith Iddon.

06.S.03 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

06.S.04 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 15 November 2005 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

06.S.05 STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee discussed the role of the Standards Sub-Committee to review the Register of Interests and the gifts and hospitality register, for both Borough and Parish Councillors.

RESOLVED – That the Membership of the Standards Sub-Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year be: Mr Tony Ellwood, Rev John Cree and Councillor Thomas Bedford, Reserve Member Councillor Thomas McGowan.

06.S.06 FIFTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES

The Chair outlined the business undertaken at the recent Annual Assembly of Standards Committees that took place in Birmingham.

The Minister for Local Government, Phil Woolas, gave an address. The local Government White Paper, due to be issued in the next few months, was likely to be devolutionary and look to empower local government, Councillors and local people in keeping with the future role of the Standards Committee. The revised draft Code is likely to be issued before the elections next May to be operative by 2008. Reference was made to Monitoring Officers linking with other Authorities to assist in the additional work load, but no guidance was give in relation to financial arrangements or how the arrangements would work.

Other topics discussed were proposed filter arrangements to deal with allegations of complaints, separate Sub-Committees to deal with referrals and hearings and training for Standards Committees, Councillors and Parish Councillors.

RESOLVED –

1. That the discussion be noted,
2. That the Chair of the Standards Committee be invited to attend the section of the induction day for new Members relating to Standards.

06.S.07 TRAINING FOR MEMBERS

The Monitoring Officer advised that training would be provided on the revised Code of Conduct once it was adopted. It was noted that each Borough Councillor had been offered a Personal Development Plan and that the time of the Members Learning Hour was being revised to increase the attendance levels.

RESOLVED –

1. That the update on training be noted,
2. That training on Standards should be offered a couple of times per year with the sessions being offered to Parish Councils,
3. That the possibility of holding the Standards Committee in a Parish to raise awareness be investigated,
4. That the suggestion that members of the Standards Committee attend meetings of Parish Councils and give a short talk on Standards issues be considered further.

06.S.08 INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL HEARINGS

The Committee watched a DVD entitled “Going Local – Investigations and Hearings” made by the Standards Board for England. It was noted that the DVD was informative and a good training tool.

RESOLVED –

1. That the DVD be noted,
2. That the DVD be lent to the Members of the Standards Committee who had submitted their apologies.

06.S.09 THE NUMBER OF ANY ALLEGATIONS REFERRED TO THE STANDARDS BOARD SINCE THE LAST MEETING

One.

06.S.10 THE NUMBER OF ANY ALLEGATIONS REFERRED BACK TO THE MONITORING OFFICER WHERE THERE IS NO FURTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN.

None.

06.S.11 BRIEF RESUME OF DETAILS REGARDING ANY ALLEGATIONS REFERRED BACK TO THE MONITORING OFFICER WHERE ACTION IS TO BE TAKEN EITHER BY THE COMMITTEE OR MATTERS BEING REFERRED TO THE ADJUDICATION PANEL.

One.

06.S.12 ANY OTHER ITEM(S) THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES IS/ARE URGENT

The Chair suggested that an article relating to Standards be considered for a future edition of Chorley Borough News. Officers undertook to organise this.

Chair