

Standards Committee

Friday, 30 November 2007

Present: Mr Ellwood (Independent Chair), Councillor Alan Cain (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Thomas McGowan and Mrs Joan Geddes (Parish Council Member)

Officers in attendance: Andrew Docherty (Corporate Director of Governance - Monitoring Officer) and Ruth Hawes (Assistant Democratic Services Officer)

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

07.S.50 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Judith Boothman and Keith Iddon and Reverend John Cree. The Committee sent their best wishes to Reverend Cree.

07.S.51 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest by Members relating to the items on the agenda.

07.S.52 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 3 September 2007 and 18 September 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

07.S.53 STANDARDS COMMITTEE AND PARISH COUNCILS

Officer advised that letters have been sent to Committee Members with a briefing note as requested at the last meeting.

Committee Members were to make contact with the Parish Council clerks.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted and an update item be placed on the next agenda.

07.S.54 FEEDBACK FROM THE STANDARDS CONFERENCE

The Chair reported that he had attended the Annual Standards Assembly in October.

He reported that no firm guidelines were given on the new arrangements and that there was no evidence of finances being made available for the new local filtering arrangements. A pilot had been undertaken with a number of local authorities.

The Chair advised that authorities would have ten days to deal with initial complaints; the use of mediation was mentioned but no guidance was given. Other issues discussed were joint working, that meetings to consider initial complaints would be held in private, independent members should chair sub groups.

The Committee noted that guidance had been given that members could consider the initial complaint and then sit on the determination hearing. The Chair expressed his disappointment not to have more information on the new arrangements.

RESOLVED – That

1. **The update be noted,**
2. **A meeting of the Committee be arranged for early February to set out the process for Chorley and to consider the size of the Committee.**

07.S.55 MAYORAL HOSPITALITY

Members considered the report of the Monitoring Officer on Mayoral Hospitality. The Committee noted this item had been identified from the work programme.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

07.S.56 GUIDANCE TO MEMBERS ON USE OF RESOURCES

Members considered the report of the Monitoring Officer on guidance for Members on use of resources. The Committee noted this item had been identified from the work programme.

Members considered Appendix A and B. There were issues that should be added to Appendix A, including guidance on the use of the telephone line and Members' use of rooms within the Town Hall for political and private purposes.

The Committee noted that use of resources was not a major issue for the Parishes.

Members considered Appendix B and considered that the document would benefit from a review, to be clear and concise.

RESOLVED – That the guidance provided to Members on the use of Council resources be reviewed.

07.S.57 LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Committee received the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) on the Local Code of Corporate Governance.

Officers reported that Corporate Governance related to accountability. CIPFA and SOLACE have reviewed existing guidance on the topic and part of this suggests authorities have a Local Code.

The Audit Committee considered the financial side of the Code with the ethical side considered by the Standards Committee.

Members were requested to feed back any comments to officers as the Code was in draft form and could be amended. Chorley Council are one of the first authorities to introduce a Local Code.

RESOLVED – To note and support the Local Code of Corporate Governance.

07.S.58 THE NUMBER OF ANY ALLEGATIONS REFERRED TO THE STANDARDS BOARD SINCE THE LAST MEETING

- 1.

07.S.59 THE NUMBER OF ANY ALLEGATIONS REFERRED BACK TO THE MONITORING OFFICER WHERE THERE IS NO FURTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN

- 0.

07.S.60 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

0.

07.S.61 NEWS FROM THE STANDARDS BOARD/ADJUDICATION PANEL

Members considered the report of the Monitoring Officer considering the recommendations of the Adjudication Panel.

Members considered the report and noted the actions taken.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

07.S.62 WORK UNDERTAKEN TO PROMOTE THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Officers reported that a training session had been held on 19 September for all Parish Councillors on the Code of Conduct and that the slides and handouts had been distributed to all Parish Council clerks.

Guidance on predetermination and bias and mayoral hospitality had been posted on the loop, with copies of the predetermination and bias guidance having been sent to the Parish Council clerks.

The required notice advertising the adoption of a revised code by the Borough Council and twenty one of the Parish Council's had been published in a local newspaper and the Council's newspaper. Copies of this had been sent to Parish Council clerks.

All Parishes had been requested to confirm the names of their Parish Councillors and those who had not returned financial and other interest forms had been chased.

Letters detailing the mentoring arrangements had been sent to Committee Members and Parish Council clerks.

RESOLVED – That

- 1. The update be noted,**
- 2. A letter be sent to two Parish Councils requesting confirmation that the revised Code of Conduct had been adopted.**

07.S.63 STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the work programme and added the Member Officer Protocol to the list of other topics.

Officers reported that Internal Audit had undertaken a review of the Code of Conduct and had received "sound assurance". Two minor recommendations had been made and actioned.

It was suggested that the training DVD be shown to members of the Development Control Committee and a Member Learning Hour.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.

07.S.64 TRAINING DVD FROM THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND

Members watched the training DVD recently published by the Standards Board for England.

Chair