

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Standards Committee was held on 9 March 2010.

PRESENT: C Nestor (In the Chair)
Councillors Carter, Davison, C Hobson, Khan, McPartland and Taylor
Parish Council Members: Councillor I Bruce, Councillor R Macmillan

OFFICERS: M Braithwaite, C Davies, R G Long

**** AN APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of the Chair, Mr G Fell.

****DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest at this point of the meeting.

**** MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 8 December 2009 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND – BULLETIN NO. 47

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted for information, a copy of the latest edition of the bulletin issued by Standards for England, Bulletin No. 47, a copy of which would be circulated to all Members of the Council. Members' attention was drawn in particular to the following issues:

- 2010 Annual Assembly of Standards Committee – A place for standards –
The 2010 event would be held in Birmingham on 18/19th October 2010.
- Stakeholder Tracker 2009 – 'A qualitative assessment of advice and guidance
This research assessed the levels of satisfaction of members and officers in local government with Standards for England's performance and their attitudes to the ethical environment. In order to assist authorities in with dealing with complaints Monitoring Officers were now able to access a helpline for councils, Regional networks and local protocols had been established and joint training with other authorities was taking place.

Members were advised that due to the number of parish councillors appointed nation-wide, the majority of complaints received related to parish councillors rather than district councillors. Middlesbrough Council was only responsible for two parish councils and, to date, no complaints had ever been received under the current arrangements.

- Abolition of the Adjudication Panel for England
Notification relating to the transfer of its functions to the First-Tier Tribunal (Local Government Standards in England).
- Social Networking : an effective medium of communications but not without risk.
How councillors use social networking effectively and ethically to engage with local communities.
- Online Guidance and Information – Standards for England
Copies of the following related guidance were received and would be circulated to all Members:
 - Charitable Trustees and declarations of interest under the Code
 - Freemasons and the Code
 - Independent Members
 - Notifications to parish and town councils concerning complaints about their members and the standards committee

- Role and appointment of parish and town council representatives to the standards committee
- Blogging quick guide
- Standards Committee can take a lead from 'notable practice'
Research into 'notable practice' carried out jointly by Hull University and the University of Teesside. A report on this item would be presented at the next meeting of the committee.
- Impartial and Objective Investigators
The Council currently has a small pool of officers who carry out the majority of investigations but reciprocal arrangements are now in place to share investigators from other Tees Valley authorities where conflicts of interest arise.
- Delay on the New Code of Conduct
Due to lack of Parliamentary time it was unlikely that the proposed new Code for Members would be laid before Parliament during the current Parliamentary session.

NOTED

ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2010/2011

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a draft programme of work to be undertaken by the Committee during the municipal year 2010/2011.

ORDERED that the draft annual work programme be approved, and that any additional subject areas that Members may wish to add to the programme be notified to the Senior Governance Officer.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS 2010/2011

Proposed dates for meetings of the committee to be held during the municipal year 2010/2011 were suggested as follows:

Tuesday 8 June 2010 – 10.00 a.m.
Tuesday 7 September 2010 – 10.00 a.m.
Tuesday 7 December 2010 – 10.00 a.m.
Tuesday 8 March 2011 – 10.00 a.m.

RECOMMENDED that the above dates and times for future meetings be approved.

NUNTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE – IAN BRUCE

Councillor Bruce reported that as he would be resigning from the Nunthorpe Parish Council this would be his last meeting of the committee. Councillor Bruce had enjoyed his time as a member of the Standards Committee having served as a parish council representative since 2002. He wished the committee well in its future endeavours. The Chair on behalf of the committee expressed appreciation for the many years service and contributions to the work of the committee and wished Councillor Bruce well for his retirement.