

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Standards Committee was held on 8 June 2010.

PRESENT: G Fell, (Chair).
Councillors Carter, Elder, C Hobson, McPartland and Sanderson.
Independent Members: Prof B Footitt and Mr C Nestor.
Parish Council Members: Councillors R Macmillan and C Morrish.

OFFICERS: M Braithwaite, C Davies, S Harker and R G Long.

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Junier and Taylor.

****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.

NEW MEMBER WELCOME

The Chair welcomed newly appointed members of the Committee; Councillors Elder, Morrish and Sanderson, to the meeting.

TEES VALLEY INDEPENDENT STANDARDS MEMBERS MEETING

The minutes of a Tees Valley Independent Standards Members meeting held on 22 April 2010 were received and noted.

NOTED

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES 2010 - ATTENDANCE

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services presented a report to seek instructions regarding attendance at the 2010 Annual Assembly of Standards Committees. The 2010 Annual Assembly of Standards Committee was scheduled to take place between 18th and 19th October 2010 at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham. The event programme entitled "A Place for Standards" would build on current knowledge of the Code of Conduct and the Local Standards Framework. The estimated cost per delegate including travel and accommodation was £800.

ORDERED that Middlesbrough Council would not be represented at the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees 2010.

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE – RESEARCH REPORT BY UNIVERSITIES OF HULL AND TEESIDE

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services reported details of a research project undertaken by the University of Teesside working jointly with the University of Hull on the work of Standards Committees. The project assessed the impact of Standards Committees and their varied remits.

The research considered nine different Authorities and examples of notable practice demonstrated including organisational learning, working with town and parish councils, developing Members, working with partnerships, recruitment and retention, joint training and development, joint Standards and Audit committees, high pressure/high profile investigations and embedding standards.

NOTED

LICENSING ACT 2003 – DEFINITION OF INTERESTED PARTIES

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services presented details of a change to the Licensing Act 2003 and its effect on requirements for Member Declarations of Interest. A report was presented to the Licensing Committee on 22 February 2010 drawing attention to the change to the Act which extended the definition of 'interested parties' to include elected Councillors. The change had implications for Councillors when they made representations on licensing matters to a Licensing Committee either in a personal capacity or when they were representing constituents' views.

The amendment enabled elected Councillors to make representations in their own right in respect of new applications and variations of existing premises licences. In addition, elected Councillors could apply to review existing premises licences where they had concerns about the impact caused to the local community by the running of the premises.

NOTED

REVIEW OF THE REGISTERS OF INTEREST REGISTER AND REGISTER OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services presented a report to provide Members with details of entries made in the Members' Register of Interests and the Register of Gifts and Hospitality. The Council's Code of Conduct required Councillors and Co-opted Members to register their financial and other interests and the Monitoring Officer was required to establish and maintain a register of those interests.

As part of its work programme for the year, the Standards Committee had resolved to review the entries registered by Members and Officers. Details of entries on the Register of Gifts and Hospitality received during 2009/2010 were appended to the submitted report. It was noted that not all entries indicated whether the gift or hospitality was accepted or declined. It was suggested that Members and Officers were reminded of their obligation to provide complete information in relation to all declarations.

Responsibility for ensuring that interests were declared and for submitting updates to entries rested with individual Members. The Registers, which could be inspected by the public during normal office opening hours, were available at the meeting.

NOTED

ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS

Standards for England

A copy of an email received on 1 June 2010 from the Chair of Standards for England was tabled and circulated for Members' information. The Government had announced in the recent Queen's Speech that the proposed Decentralisation and Localism Bill would include proposals to 'abolish the Standards Board regime'. Beyond this statement there were currently no clear details of the scope of implications of this proposal. Therefore, until such time as the relevant legislation was passed, the statutory framework would remain operative.

NOTED

Standards Committee – Draft Annual Report 2009/2010

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services tabled and circulated the draft annual report on the work of the Standards Committee during the year 2009/2010. The Committee was asked to consider the draft Annual Report and propose any further items for inclusion.

Learning and Development activities for Members were recognised as an essential part of the package of support provided to assist them to undertake their roles and this would be highlighted in the Foreword from the Chair.

ORDERED that the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Chair, be authorised to make any necessary amendments to the report, prior to submission to Council.