

Standards Committee

Monday 5 January, 2009 at 6.00 p.m.

at the Council House, Walsall

Present

Mr. R. Meller (Chairman)
Mr. L. Bates (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor A. Andrew
Councillor B. Cassidy
Ms. K. McLeod
Councillor M. Pitt
Councillor V. Woodruff

287/09 Apologies

An apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Mr. A. Wood and Dr. K. Biscomb.

288/09 Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meetings held on 30 October and 11 December 2008, copies having been sent to each member of the Committee, be approved and signed by the Chairman as correct records.

289/09 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

290/08 Appointment of independent members to Standards Committee

The report of the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services and Monitoring Officer was submitted:

(see annexed)

In response to questions raised by the Committee, the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services (Mr. Gill) recommended using the same recruitment system as in previous years, with the successful candidates appointed for a period of three years. He further advised that when Ms. McLeod, Dr. Biscomb and Mr. Wood were appointed in 2008, they were all appointed for the same period office until 2010/11. In order to fit in with the Committee's agreed system of rotation, Mr. Gill confirmed that he would draw lots at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee discussed ways of attracting new independent members and it was agreed that Mr. Gill explore using the next edition of Walsall Pride as a recruitment tool. The issue of remuneration for independent members was raised and Mr. Gill confirmed that this would be addressed when the Independent Remuneration Panel next met to review the Members' Allowances Scheme. Following on, the issue of subsistence was raised and Mr. Gill confirmed that he would bring a report to the next meeting of the Committee which would detail the subsistence/expenses scheme.

The Committee reviewed the role of an independent member and in particular the special conditions. Concern was raised on point 11 – "You cannot apply, if you are a relative or close friend of a member or employee of the Council or are employed by or a member of any public body, which had a Standards Committee" and point 13 – "You must disclose whether you are an active member of any political party at local, regional or national level".

Following discussion it was proposed that point 13 of the document be amended as follows:

the words "an active" be changed to "a" and "or an employee" be inserted before "of any".

Mr. Gill confirmed that he would revise this wording before the recruitment process was underway.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That the Committee support the recruitment process to the two vacancies for independent members and note that the recommended period of office will be until the end of the municipal year 2011/12 (not 2010/11 as set out in the report).
- (3) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services "draw lots" to determine the period of service for Ms. McLeod, Dr. Biscomb and Mr. Wood at the next meeting of the Committee.
- (4) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services explore using "Walsall Pride" as a recruitment tool.

- (5) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services prepare a report on the authority's subsistence and expenses scheme for the next meeting of the Committee.
- (6) That the wording contained in the Role and Description of an independent member (special conditions) be amended as follows:

the words "an active" be changed to "a" and "or an employee" be inserted before "of any".

291/09 Members' attendance at Committee 2008/2009

The report of the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services and Monitoring Officer was submitted:

(see annexed)

In response to questions raised by the Committee, the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services confirmed that the report covered a period of six months and gave an anonymous overview of members' attendance. During the discussion the Committee was advised that Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel had established a Sub-Committee, which it was agreed should be included in future reports. Members' attendance at Council meetings was detailed and it was agreed further that comparisons be made with neighbouring local authorities in the next report to be presented to the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services forward a copy of the report to each of the group leaders so that they are aware of members' attendance at Council and Committees.
- (3) That the Health Sub-Committee of the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel be included in future reports to the Committee, in addition to comparisons with members' attending Council meetings in neighbouring local authorities.

**292/09 Standards Local Assessment of Complaints training sessions
31 July 2008**

The report of the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services and Monitoring Officer was submitted:

(see annexed)

In response to questions raised by the Committee, the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services advised that he would look at alternative methods of delivering training to elected members.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services review alternative methods of delivering training to elected members.

293/09 **Standards Board for England – The Bulletin – December 2008**

The report of the Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services and Monitoring Officer was submitted:

(see annexed)

The Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services presented the report and answered questions raised by the Committee arising from the report, following which it was:

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That copies of “The Bulletin” be circulated to all members and co-opted members and placed in each of the political group rooms.

The meeting terminated at 7.05 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: