

Standards Committee

Monday 8 October, 2007 at 6.00 p.m.

at the Council House, Walsall

Present

Mr. R. Meller (Chairman)
Mr. L. Bates (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor T. Ansell
Dr. K. Biscomb
Ms. K. McLeod
Councillor A. Underhill
Councillor V. Woodruff

227/07 **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June, 2007, a copy having been circulated previously to each member of the Committee, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

228/07 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

229/07 **Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review 2006/07**

The report of the Executive Director was submitted:

(see annexed)

Mr. J. Pryce-Jones, Corporate Performance Manager (Customer focus and intelligence) outlined the report confirming that complaints which had been sent to the Ombudsman during 2006/07 had risen slightly to 58 from 53 during the previous year. He indicated that this had not been seen as a significant increase as society had changed to see individuals more likely to raise concerns and confirmed that a total of 15 complaints during this period had been resolved in local settlement. He further advised that the key issues raised by the Ombudsman included keeping all parties informed and answering correspondence in a timely manner which were being addressed by the Council. He finally advised that no reports had been made to the Ombudsman against the Council in the last five years.

Resolved

That the contents of the report be noted.

230/07 6th Annual Assembly of Standards Committees

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

(see annexed)

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That the report relating to the 6th Annual Assembly of Standards Committees be tabled at the January meeting.

231/07 Development of short medium term training plan for elected members

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

(see annexed)

Mr. B. Gill, Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services and Monitoring Officer outlined the report and advised that the proposed training plan for members would highlight both mandatory training that all members should attend, as well as training members were recommended to attend for the forthcoming year. He confirmed that previous training courses had poor attendance on a number of occasions and to address this members are to be contacted for their views, in the first instance, which will further develop the plan which will be set at the beginning of the year.

During the discussion, Councillor Underhill questioned how the proposed plan would link with the work of the Member/officer development steering group. Mr. Gill responded advising that the proposed programme would “dovetail” with member development and would not work in isolation with a number of the proposed courses broadening the role of the Standards Committee and its ethical agenda.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That the Committee agree to the development of short/medium term training plan for elected members for 2007/08.

232/07 **Standards Board for England – The Bulletin**

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

(see annexed)

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report and bulletin be noted.
- (2) That copies of the bulletin be circulated to all members, co-optees and placed in each of the political group rooms.

233/07 **Standards Board for England – 2006/07 annual review**

The Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services and Monitoring Officer circulated the latest edition of the Standards Board for England – annual review and highlighted aspects of the report:

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the contents of the report be noted.

234/07 **Dispensations for members**

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

(see annexed)

Mr. Gill, Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services and Monitoring Officer outlined the report advising that the process for dispensations had not changed since its introduction in 2002, however, as the Council now had a number of new members since that time, the report would serve as a reminder of the process for everyone.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the Monitoring Officer be requested to write to all members appointed to the Council this year, informing them of the dispensation provisions.

235/07 **Pre-disposition, pre-determination, bias**

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

(see annexed)

Resolved

- (1) That the advice contained with the two appendices (the “occasional paper” and advice of Philip Sales QC) be noted.
- (2) That both appendices be circulated to all members of the Council and co-optees.

236/07 **Update on alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct for elected members**

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

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the details contained in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.

237/07 **Code of Conduct DVD from the Standards Board for England**

The Committee viewed the DVD “Code of Conduct – the Code uncovered”.

Resolved

That the contents of the DVD be noted.

The meeting terminated at 8.00 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: