

Standards Committee

Wednesday 19 July, 2006 at 6.00 p.m.

at the Council House, Walsall

Present

Mr. R. Taylor
Dr. K. Biscomb
Councillor H. Khan
Mrs. S.F. Parsons
Councillor A. Underhill

In attendance

Mr. L. Bates

193/06 Apologies

An apology for non-attendance was submitted on behalf of Councillor Bentley.

194/06 Minutes

Mr. R. Taylor and Dr. K. Biscomb made the point that at the meeting on 7 June 2006 they had been appointed Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively for that meeting only and not for the full municipal year as indicated in the minutes.

The Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services advised members that the Committee could appoint a Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee for this meeting only and, when the two vacancies for independent members were filled in October, give consideration to appointing a Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year.

Resolved

- (a) That subject to the amendment to reflect the fact that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman being appointed for the meeting only and not for the municipal year as indicated, the minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2006, a copy having been circulated previously to each member of the Committee, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record;

- (b) That Mr. R. Taylor and Dr. K. Biscomb be appointed Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the Committee for this meeting only.

Mr. R. Taylor in the Chair

195/06 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations.

196/06 **Standards of Conduct in British Local Government – The future**

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 and indicated that the powers of local authorities in this respect were limited. He added that the Standards Board would seek to have powers of intervention if they considered that the Standards Committee were not up to the task. He went on to say that, with regard to the role of Monitoring Officers, there was no requirement for formal qualifications for Monitoring Officers.

With regard to the draft Code of Conduct for officers, he indicated that it would be possible to recommend the strengthening of the draft code for officers with the Council's own more robust scheme.

Councillor Underhill referred to political assistants pay and made the point that there were no political assistants operating in Walsall. Mr. Gill confirmed that this was the case and indicated that group leaders may want to revisit this issue in the future.

Councillor Underhill then referred to the draft code of conduct for officers and asked how members could report officers. She expressed the view that the code of conduct for officers needed to be strengthened. In reply, Mr. Gill advised members that there was a code of conduct for officers and that this was appended to the Council's Constitution. In addition there would be disciplinary procedures. He added that the code imposed similar duties on officers to members. Complaints would have to go initially to the line manager or the Monitoring Officer. On this issue, he asked whether members felt that broader training was needed to include updates on the code of conduct for members and the code of conduct for officers.

Resolved

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Monitoring Officer be requested to undertake to provide the training identified above in October 2006.

/06 **Schedule 12A, Local Government Act, 1972**

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

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the report be noted.

/06 **Going Local investigations – DVD from Standards Board for England**

The Committee viewed the DVD “Going Local Investigations”. It was suggested that the DVD could be used as part of member training.

Resolved

- (a) That the contents of the DVD be noted;
- (b) That the DVD be used as part of the training to be provided by the Monitoring Officer in October 2006.

Termination of meeting

The meeting terminated at p.m.

Chairman:

Date: