

## Standards Committee

A meeting of Standards Committee was held on Thursday, 23rd October, 2008.

**Present:** Mr F W Hayes(Chairman), Mrs E Chapman(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr Ken Dixon, Mrs F. Robinson(Independent), Mr, T. Bowman(Parish Representative), Mr C.V Algie(Parish Representative), Mr C. Nestor(Substitute Independent), Mr R. Mosley(Substitute Parish Representative)

**Officers:** D. Bond, A. Squires, S. Johnson, K. Wannop(LD)

**Also in attendance:** Cllr John Fletcher

**Apologies:** Cllr Ian Dalgarno

### **S**      **Declarations of Interest**

**75/08**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **S**      **Minutes of the Meetings held on the 4th July 2008 and 31st July 2008.**

**76/08**

Members received minutes of the meetings held on 4th July 2008 and 31st July 2008 for information.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

### **S**      **Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th August 2008**

**77/08**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th August 2008 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **S**      **Members' and Officers' Interests**

**78/08**

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on Members' and Officers' interests.

It was explained that a further reminder about updating interests on the Member's register had been circulated and the reminder also covered co-optees and their register details. Advice about interests continued to be provided to Members and to Town/Parish clerks.

A (Monitoring Officer) inspection of the Officers' register had taken place on 16 October. The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that a number of changes to the staff lists had been highlighted as a result of the inspection where staff had left or just joined the Authority. It had also been highlighted that some existing staff on the lists had not made returns for 2008. The Monitoring Officer had issued guidance to Officers on these points.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

### **S**      **Members' and Officers' Gifts and Hospitality**

**79/08**

The Committee considered a report that provided details of the procedures relating to Members' and Officers' gifts and hospitality and the returns submitted

during the second quarter of the year (1 July 2008 - 30 September 2008).

The Members' Register had again been reviewed and Members of the Committee were given details of gifts/hospitality received by Members in the second quarter of the year.

It was explained that a further review had been undertaken of the Officers' gifts and hospitality register.

The Committee was again provided with examples of details submitted during the second quarter of the year.

It was noted that the regular reminders regarding the procedures, relevant forms and guidance had continued to be provided to Members and Officers. Ad hoc advice had also continued to be given e.g. regarding gifts received during SIRF and as a result of the Olympics hosting and handover.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

**S**  
**80/08**      **Attendance at Town/Parish Council Meetings**

Consideration was given to a report relating to attendance at Town/Parish Council Meetings by members of the Committee. The following meetings had been attended:-

Elton Parish Council, 18 September 2008 - attended by Edna Chapman and Roger Mosley

Wolviston Parish Council, 14 October 2008 - attended by Edna Chapman.

Attendees of the above meetings provided their views on the meetings for consideration by the Committee and responses were agreed for the purposes of feedback to the relevant Town/Parish Councils.

RESOLVED that the Director of Law and Democracy formulates letters in the Chairman's name to the clerks of the town/parish councils for approval by the Chairman, in order to provide feedback on the Standards Committee's Members observations at the recent town/parish council meetings.  
(Councillor Mrs Apedaile took no part in the discussion or decision regarding the Committee Members' attendance at the Wolviston Parish Council Meeting)

**S**  
**81/08**      **Summary of Allegations of Misconduct determined by the Standards Board for England and Cases referred for Local Investigation**

The Committee considered a report that provided details of misconduct allegations regarding Members of Councils within the Stockton Borough area, which had been dealt with locally by the Standards Committee during the second quarter of 2008/09.

As previously reported, there had been two allegations which had been investigated locally and which were in the process of being reported to the Standards Committee for a determination as to whether a hearing was required or not, in either case. One of these matters had now been dealt with by the Consideration Sub-Committee.

It was explained that during the period 1 July 2008 to 30 September 2008 4 complaints had been received and considered by the Assessment Sub-Committee. Three reviews had also been conducted by the Review Sub-Committee. It was noted that details had previously been, or would be reported to the Committee about these matters in the form of the minutes of the Sub-Committee meetings concerned.

The Committee was informed that out of five further allegations, four had now been dealt with, leaving one still outstanding.

RESOLVED that information be noted.

**S**  
**82/08**      **Work Programme 2008/09 - Monitoring Officer**

Consideration was given to a report that provided the Committee with a position statement regarding the six months progress in fulfilling the Monitoring Officer work programme for 2008/09.

The Monitoring Officer Annual Report for 2007/08, as reported to 28 August meeting, included a work programme for 2008/09.

The Committee was provided with a schedule containing details of that work programme. The schedule set out the seven improvement areas, key actions for each, the target dates for completion, progress, any comments, any necessary remedial action and revised target dates.

It was noted that a final year end outcome would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee in the new municipal year.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

**S**  
**83/08**      **Local Assessment - Case Studies**

The Committee considered two case studies from the recent IDeA/ACSeS/SBE Workshop.

Members of the Committee considered and discussed the two allegations and provided their views on whether there had been an apparent breach of the code and, if so, whether they considered that further action was necessary.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

**S**  
**84/08**      **Local Assessment Framework**

The Committee were asked to consider the following information regarding the Local Assessment Framework, taking into account the changes referred to verbally at the meeting by the monitoring officer:

1. Standards Committee Sub-Committee Minutes
2. Monitoring Officer Protocol - Proposed Revision

RESOLVED that the information be noted/approved as appropriate.

**S**  
**85/08**      **Information/Discussion Items**

Members received a verbal update regarding the Seventh Annual Assembly of Standards Committees - Delivering the Goods - 13 and 14 October 2008 from Members who attended.

Consideration was given to and a preliminary discussion took place on a report on Codes of Conduct for local authority members and employees - A consultation. It was agreed that Members of the Committee would consider the document prior to the next meeting and agree responses for the list of consultation questions at Annex A of the document at the next meeting.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The information be noted/received.
2. Members of the Committee consider the consultation document prior to the next meeting and agree responses for the list of consultation questions at Annex A of the document at the next meeting.

**S**  
**86/08**      **Standards Committee Forward Plan 2008/09**

Consideration was given to the updated version of the Standards Committee Forward Plan.

RESOLVED that the Standards Committee Forward Plan be noted/received.