

Standards Committee

A meeting of Standards Committee was held on Thursday, 15th January, 2009.

Present: Mr F W Hayes(Chairman), Mrs E Chapman(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Paul Baker, Mr C.V Algie(Parish Representative), Mr T. Bowman(Parish Representative), Mr R Mosley(Substitute Parish Representative), Mr C Nestor(Substitute Independent), Cllr John Fletcher

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

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: Cllr Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Ken Dixon

S Declarations of Interest

107/08

There were no declaration of interest.

S Assessment Sub Committee Minutes

108/08

Members received minutes of the meeting held on the 8th December 2008.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

S Observing Council Meetings

109/08

The Committee was informed that the following meeting had been attended:-
- Housing and Community Safety Select Committee on 18th December 2008 attended by Mr F.W Hayes and Mr C. Nestor. The Committee discussed the assessment sheets from the meeting.

The Committee agreed that feedback to the relevant council members and officers would be provided following Committee members' attendance at a further Housing and Community Safety Select Committee Meeting in January 2009.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

S Members' and Officers' Gifts and Hospitality

110/08

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 Third quarter of the year (1 October 2008 - 31 December 2008).

The Members' Register had again been reviewed and the Committee was provided with examples of gifts/hospitality received by Members in the third quarter of the year.

A further review had been undertaken of the Officers' gifts and hospitality

register. Details of the findings were provided to the Committee. Examples of details submitted during the third quarter of the year were also provided.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

S Members' and Officers' Interests

111/08

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

Members were informed that reminders about updating interests on the Member's register continued to be circulated. Revised details were being received on a quite regular basis. The reminders also covered co-optees and their register details and parish clerks on behalf of their Councillors.

Advice about interests continued to be provided before Cabinet and Council meetings and on an ad hoc basis when required. Advice provided for the 26 November (Council) and 4 December (Cabinet) meetings was provided to the Committee .

A (Monitoring Officer) register inspection of Officers' Register of Interests had taken place during December. The Committee was presented with details of the actions arising from this.

It was noted that updates to Town/Parish Council registers were received fairly regularly and advice about declarations of interest continued to be provided to Town/Parish Council Clerks when requested or considered necessary. Anonymised examples of such advice were presented to Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

S Summary of Allegations of Misconduct Referred for Local Investigation

112/08

Members 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 third quarter of 2008/09.

As previously reported, there were two allegations which had been investigated locally as a result of referrals from the Standards Board. One of the cases had been dealt with by the Consideration Sub-Committee on 23 October 2008. The minutes of the meeting were reported to the last Standards Committee meeting. The second case was due to be referred to a Consideration Sub-Committee meeting in January or February.

The Committee was informed that during the period 1 October 2008 to 31 December 2008 three complaints had been received and considered by the Assessment Sub-Committee. Details had previously been, or would be reported to the Committee in the form of the minutes of the Sub-Committee meetings concerned. It was noted that currently, there was a review pending for one case.

There were no allegations currently awaiting assessment. Four allegations were, however being investigated locally.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

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113/08 **Local Assessment - Case Studies**

Members considered a case study from the recent Standards Committees' Assembly.

The Committee considered and discussed a summary of an investigation report and provided their views on what decisions they would make and who they would notify of it. The Committee also gave their views on how their decision might change under different circumstances.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

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114/08 **Local Assessment Framework**

The Committee was asked to consider the following information regarding the Local Assessment Framework:-

1. Standards Board Bulletin – Issue 41
2. Standards Board Guidance to Ethical Standards Officers

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

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115/08 **Information/Discussion Items**

Members of the Committee considered the following ITEMS :-

1. Use of Resources – 2007/08 – Draft Assessment
2. Committee on Standards in Public Life - Local Leadership and Public Trust - Issues and Questions Paper
3. Standards Board for England Events 2009
4. Communities in Control: Real People; real power: Codes of Conduct for local authority members and employees - a Consultation - Standards Board Response.

The Committee discussed item 2 and in particular the information at paragraph 2.29 relating to promoting openness and accountability in local government. The Committee was informed that the Members Advisory Panel would in due course be receiving the questions at paragraph 2.29 of the report for their consideration and views. The comments of the Members Advisory Panel would be made known to the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

S **Standards Committee Forward Plan 2008/2010**

116/08

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

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