

Standards Committee

A meeting of Standards Committee was held on Wednesday, 1st July, 2009.

Present: Mr F W Hayes(Chairman), Cllr Paul Baker, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Ken Dixon, Mr T Bowman(Parish Representative), Mr R. Mosley(Substitute Parish Representative), Cllr John Fletcher(Substitute Elected Member)

Officers: Mr D.E Bond, Mr A. Squires, Mr N. Hart, Miss K. Wannop(LD)

Also in attendance: Member of the Public

Apologies: Mr C.V Algie, Mrs E Chapman, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Mr C. Nestor, Mrs F Robinson, Cllr Andrew Sherris

S **Declarations of Interest**

28/09

There were no declarations of interest.

S **Observing Council Meetings**

29/09

The Committee was informed that the following meeting had been attended:-
- Cabinet on 11th June 2009 attended by Freda Robinson. Observations from the meeting were considered.

Members were provided with details of the feedback which had been provided to the relevant Members and officers as a result of committee members' previous observations at meetings.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

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

30/09

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 first quarter of the year.

The Members' Register had again been reviewed and examples of gifts/hospitality received by Members in the first quarter of the year were provided. Members were last asked to update their register details following the annual meeting on 1 April. A further reminder would be sent in due course.

The Committee was informed that a further review had also been undertaken of the Officers' gifts and hospitality register. Details of the findings were provided. Examples of returns submitted during the first quarter of the year were also supplied. Officers had last been reminded about updating their register details on 22ND June 2009.

The Committee commented on hospitality which had been accepted by officers from SBC partners and questioned whether this was appropriate. The Monitoring Officer advised that whilst, in itself, the acceptance of such gifts was not necessarily contrary to the Code of Conduct, there were circumstances where it would clearly be inappropriate to accept such hospitality eg where officers involved in awarding a contract accepted gifts or hospitality from

existing or potential contractors, particularly during the actual tender process. It was also considered that even in other situations, officers should always carefully consider what the perceptions of others might be, before deciding to accept gifts or hospitality. The Monitoring Officer advised that he would pass Members comments on to officers with a view to providing more specific advice.

RESOLVED that

1. The report be noted
2. The action proposed by the Monitoring Officer be agreed.

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31/09 **Members' and Officers' Interests**

The Committee considered a report that provided details of the procedures relating to Members' and Officers' Interests and the returns submitted during the first quarter of the year.

Members were informed that revised details of members' interests continued to be received since the last registration reminder sent following the annual meeting. Details of the most recent advice provided before Cabinet and Council meetings was provided. Examples of recent declarations by Members were also provided.

The Committee was informed that a (Monitoring Officer) register inspection of the Officers' register had taken place on 16 June 2009. The results of the inspection were outlined.

Members were provided with recent guidance which had been given to Town/Parish Clerks regarding declarations of interest. Copies of updates to Parish register details also continued to be received.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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32/09 **Local Assessment - Case Studies**

Members were asked to consider a case study. The Committee considered and discussed a summary of an investigation report and provided their views on what decisions they would have made.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

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33/09 **Local Assessment Framework**

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

1. Advice Note - Consideration Sub-Committee Decisions – this was agreed.
2. Standards Board - Other Action Guidance – the guidance was noted.
3. Note to Stockton Council Members - Dispensations - The Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Regulations 2009 – the advice which

would be provided to members was agreed.

4. Standards Committee Development Programme 2009/10 – noted.

5. Members Code of Conduct - Alleged Breaches - Tees Valley Protocol – noted.

RESOLVED that the information be agreed/noted, as indicated.

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34/09 **Information/Discussion Items**

Members of the Committee considered the following items:-

1. Statement on constitutional renewal – noted.

2. Standards Board Press Release- noted.

RESOLVED that the information be noted as indicated.

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35/09 **Standards Committee Forward Plan 2008/2010**

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

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