

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10 February 2010 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

PRESENT:

Councillors: Coker, Dean, Gifford, Mrs Tyrrell and Vincett.

Independent Representatives: Mr C Bennett, Mr C Purser, Miss Ratcliffe and Mr P Willers.

Parish and Town Council Representatives: Councillors Mrs Gordon, Polgreen, Singh, and Smart.

Officers: Mr R Inman (Head of Members' Services and Monitoring Officer).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Falp.

Councillor Dean substituted for Councillor Mrs Knight.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

27. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2009 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

28. CODE OF CONDUCT DECLARATIONS

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services which outlined a recommendation made by the Review Sub-Committee that declarations of interest, as referred to within the Council's Code of Conduct, should also be made at meetings of working parties, Panels and informal meetings.

The report followed a complaint that a member of the Council did not declare an interest in a particular matter during a meeting of a Working Party. Although no breach of the Code of Conduct was found by the Assessment Sub-Committee, nor by the Review Sub-Committee, it was agreed that the making and recording of declarations of interest at working parties, Panels and informal meetings, would help protect Councillors from complaints being made on this matter in the future.

The existing wording of the Council's Code of Conduct did not specifically include working parties, Panels or informal meetings and the report requested consideration being given to the Council making additions to it. The Committee were mindful that the recommendation was not specific enough and agreed amended wording.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

RECOMMENDED that the Council's Code of Conduct be amended so that meetings of Working Parties, Panels and meetings where an interest could be considered to have influenced a decision, be included within the remit of the Code.

29. LOCAL DETERMINATION OF COMPLAINTS – APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATOR

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services that outlined reasons and a protocol for appointing independent, external investigators with regard to complaints made about the conduct of councillors.

Guidance from Standards for England indicated that the Monitoring Officer should normally advise the Standards Committee when hearing a complaint, and therefore would not be able to conduct an investigation personally. Ordinarily, as a result, the Monitoring Officer would delegate the investigation of complaints to their nominated representative.

Complaints referred to the Monitoring Officer for local investigation had to be handled impartially and in a way that gave the subject of the complaint and the complainant confidence in the outcome.

RESOLVED that the protocol set out in the report be approved.

30. WORK PLAN

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services setting out its agreed work plan for the ensuing municipal year.

The Committee requested that an item be added to the work plan regarding the Development Review Forum. It was agreed that when the report was submitted to the Committee that a representative from the Planning Service be present to answer any queries Members' may have, along with a member of staff from the new Legal Services team.

It was also agreed that the meeting of the Committee to be held in April, should be rearranged to another date, with the preference being 15 April 2010.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the Work Plan be noted; and
- (2) an additional item be added regarding the Development Review Forum, to be brought to the next meeting.

(The meeting ended at 6.50 pm)