

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 25 September 2008, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

PRESENT:

Councillors: Davies, Gifford, Mrs Knight, Mrs McFarland and Mrs Tyrrell.

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

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Guest and Heath and the Venerable Michael Paget-Wilkes.

Mr C Bennett the substitute Independent representative was also present.

In the absence of the Chair of the Committee the Vice Chair (Mr Purser) took the Chair for the meeting.

Mr Purser took the opportunity to welcome the new Independent Representatives, Mr C Bennett, Miss J Ratcliffe and Mr P Willers to the Committee.

468. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Minute Number 470 – Dispensation Application – Whitnash Town Council

Councillor Smart declared a personal interest because he was a member of Whitnash Town Council.

469. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 29 July 2008 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

470. DISPENSATION APPLICATION – WHITNASH TOWN COUNCIL

The Monitoring Officer reported that he had met with the Clerk to Whitnash Town Council regarding a potential need for dispensation.

The issue was in relation to the Finance Committee. Grants were awarded by the Finance Committee of Whitnash Council. The most problematic subject was the customary award of a grant to cover the administrative expenses of the Twinning Committee, a body entirely separate to the Town Council.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES(Continued)

The membership of the Finance Committee was such that, provided there was full attendance, the Committee would be quorate even after those members with prejudicial interests had left the room. On that basis the Monitoring Officer had asked the Clerk to consider if it would be possible to ensure that future appointments to the Finance Committee provided for the committee to have the sufficient members who were not involved with the Twinning Committee to provide for the quorum plus one additional member.

RESOLVED that the update from the Monitoring Officer be noted.

471. LOCAL STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

The Committee considered a report from the Monitoring Officer that commented on the new “Local Standards Framework” published by the Standards Board for England.

The Local Standards Framework was aimed to provide guidance for Standards Committee on how to undertake its work on the investigation, assessment and determination of complaints regarding breaches of the adopted Codes of Conduct.

The Local Standards Framework was, in some places, incomplete to allow Standards Committees to determine how they wanted to approach individual aspects. The Monitoring Officer provided an overview of the Local Standards Framework and highlighted the areas where the Committee would need to take a decision on the approach of this authority.

The Monitoring Officer reported that the Standards Board for England had now agreed to provide sufficient copies of the Local Standards Framework folder for each member of this Standards Committee and an order had been placed for these.

The Committee also discussed the production of guidance packs for Parish and Town Councils and increased publicity of the process for considering a code of conduct matters. It was agreed that this would be devised once the approach to handling the investigation of complaints had been agreed.

RESOLVED that

- (1) content of the report be noted; and
- (2) the Monitoring Officer submits a report to the next meeting to enable the Committee to decide on the approach of this authority.

472. WORK PLAN

The Committee were updated on the work plan by the Senior Committee Services Officer.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES(Continued)

As part of this item the Committee agreed to hold a training session on 8 December 2008 for members of the Committee where they would take on the role of an assessment sub committee followed by a review sub-committee.

A training session would also be arranged in the near future for members of the Committee on dispensation hearings.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the work plan was agreed; and
- (2) the Committee work towards entering the LGC Standards and Ethics award in 2010.

(The meeting ended at 7.35pm)