

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the informal meeting held on Tuesday, 21 June 2005 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa, at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Ms Flanagan and Short

Councillors Mrs A Gordon and B Smart

Apologies for absence were received from the Venerable M Paget-Wilkes, Mr I Morgan and Councillor Guest.

144. MEETING

The Committee was informed that the meeting was inquorate as neither independent representatives were able to attend. However, it was agreed that the meeting should proceed on an informal basis but that it would not be possible to make any decisions.

145. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

It was agreed that Councillor Smart should Chair the meeting.

146. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

147. MEMBERS' REGISTER OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS UNDER THE MANDATORY CODE OF CONDUCT

The register containing details of financial and other interests, notified by individual Councillors, was made available for inspection by Members of the Committee.

148. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000

A report from Legal Services was received regarding the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, which required that certain safeguards should be introduced if the Council wished to carry out covert surveillance on individuals, intercept communications or use covert human intelligence sources.

The Committee had adopted an inaugural policy regarding the Regulations on 10 March 2003 and, so far, the Council had only issued two authorisations under the legislation, but the Police had conducted surveillance on Council CCTV equipment on a regular basis.

The Office of Surveillance Commissioner had inspected the Council in December 2003 and, although the inspection was satisfactory, some amendments to the policy had been suggested.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

The Inspector had also recommended that resources should be made available to fund a computerised authorisation register. As the cost of this would be significant, other possibilities were being investigated at considerably less cost.

The Committee raised some concerns about the impact that the legislation would have on the Council's resources and questioned whether it was appropriate for the District Council to be involved in such operations. The Committee also requested clarification as to whether the legislation applied to parish and town councils.

A discussion then took place over which Officers should have responsibility for authorising surveillance, and it was suggested that these should be limited to the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, the Head of Legal Services or the appropriate Director. This would help to ensure that an independent assessment of the need for surveillance was possible.

149. CODE OF CONDUCT

The Committee received a report from Members' Services summarising the comments which had been submitted to the Standards Board for England by Councillors on the review of the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

Although only a very few questionnaires had been received in the office from Members, it was possible that others had been forwarded direct to the Standards Board for England.

(The meeting ended at 6.55 pm)