

Standards Committee – Meeting held on Monday, 11th January, 2010.

Present:-

Co-opted Independent Members:-

The Reverend Paul Lipscomb (Chair), Mr Fred Ashmore, Mr Mike Field and Dr Henna Khan

Elected Members:-

Councillors P Choudhry (arrived at 6.44 p.m.), Hewitt (arrived at 6.35 p.m.), Maclsaac and Mann

Parish Councillor Representatives:-

Parish Councillor Nicoline Brandligt and Parish Councillor Dalip Rajput (arrived at 6.32 p.m.)

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Qureshi and Parish Councillor Laurie Tucker.

PART I

14. Declarations of Interest

None.

15. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 7th October, 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

16. Criteria for Granting Dispensations under the Standards Committee (Further Provisions) England Regulations 2009

The Committee was advised that, with the agreement of the Chair, this item had been withdrawn and would be submitted to the next Meeting of the Committee.

17. Members' Performance Monitoring - Attendance Records

As requested by the Standards Committee the Member Services Manager set out the action agreed by the Committee at its previous meeting regarding the recording of Members' attendance at meetings and training sessions which were:-

- That in respect of the annual monitoring attendance report, Members who, during the year under review, had experienced exceptional circumstances which accounted for a significant number of absences,

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should be invited to explain the reason for their attendance record and a footnote to that effect should be added to the report. On practical grounds, explanatory notes would only be allowed in exceptional circumstances as the reporting of reasons for individual absences would be impracticable.

- To improve Members' attendance at compulsory training sessions, the compulsory training for 2010/2011 had been incorporated into the Council's Calendar of Meetings. This would give Members advance warning of all training dates and hopefully outside bodies, particularly local ones, would have some regard to the Calendar of Meetings when fixing their meetings.
- Compulsory member training / development sessions would not be added to the Member Development Programme without the prior approval of the Council's Corporate Management Team. If any additional compulsory training sessions were approved two alternative dates for the same training session would be offered in the expectation that Members would be able to attend one of them.

At the Committee's last meeting, it was suggested that in addition to the current annual monitoring reports, each committee, sub-committee or panel should receive a report on the attendance of its Members during the current year. The rationale behind these additional reports was that Members who failed to attend meetings could be held to account by their peers. There was some discussion on how this suggestion would work in practice and the Officers were asked to report back to the Committee with possible proposals.

As the purpose of the individual reports was to influence and change Members' behaviour it was suggested that rather than submitting reports at the end of the municipal year a rolling attendance report should be submitted to each meeting. This currently happened in respect of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and seemed to work well. An example of how this report would look was attached for consideration.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report now submitted be noted.
- (b) That that action now proposed in respect of future reporting on Members' attendance at individual committee/sub-committee and panel meetings be approved and adopted with effect from the start of the municipal year 2010/2011.

18. Work Programme 2009/2010

The Officers submitted for consideration the Committee's revised work programme for 2009/2010.

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Resolved – That the current work programme for 2009/2010 now submitted be noted.

19. Showing of the Standards for England DVD - ' Assessment made clear'

The Standards Committee viewed the Standards for England DVD entitled 'Assessment made clear' which was designed to help Standards Committee members and local authority officers involved in the assessment of complaints. The DVD examined the four stages of the assessment process namely, pre-assessment, assessment, decision and review.

Having viewed the DVD the Committee discussed various issues covered by the DVD and the Monitoring Officer was asked to:-

- Check whether a decision notice following an assessment of a complaint had to be publicly advertised.
- Obtain confirmation from Standards for England that choosing alternative action such as reconciliation/mediation instead of referring a complaint for investigation would prevent any further action being taken in respect of the complaint if this alternative action failed.

Resolved – That the Monitoring Officer obtain the information now requested and report back his findings to the Members of the Committee.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.35 pm)