

## **Standards Committee – 13 January 2010**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **13 January 2010**  
when there were present:-

### **DISTRICT MEMBERS**

Cllr D Merrick (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr C I Black

Cllr P A Capon

Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn

### **INDEPENDENT MEMBERS**

Mr S Shadbolt

Mrs L Walker (Chairman for the meeting)

### **PARISH MEMBERS**

Cllr P Beckers

Cllr Mrs D Constable

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D J Cottis, Mr M G Drage and Cllr M J Steptoe.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

A Bugeja	-	Head of Legal Services
J Bostock	-	Committee Services Manager
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

## **5 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **6 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2009/10 – PART 3**

Members considered the Member Development Programme 2009/10 - Part 3, as detailed in the report of the Head of Information and Customer Services, which had been recommended for approval by the Charter Implementation Group at its meeting on 16 December 2009.

During discussion, the following was observed:-

- That, although Appeals and Licensing training courses were mandatory for Appeals and Licensing Members respectively, all Members of the Council were welcome to attend these courses.

- That it should be made clear in the Member Learning and Development booklet sent to Members that all Members are welcome and encouraged to attend any of the training sessions. Parish/Town Councillors would be invited to attend relevant training sessions in line with existing practice.
- As the Hawthorn Centre, Rochford Hospital was a training venue that had not been previously used, clear and detailed directions to the venue should be included in the Member Learning and Development booklet.

The Committee reviewed the development requests from individual Members (taken from the self-assessment questionnaires completed in February 2009). It was agreed that requests for training should be considered if they can be seen as assisting the Member in performing their role as a District Councillor.

The development requests from individual Members contained in the Appendix were endorsed subject to the following:-

- The request for training in HTML website development being declined as this could be seen to be of benefit to an individual/political party, rather than the Council as a whole.
- Members felt they could not support the request from an Independent Member for training and development specific to the role of Independent Member. All Members should be encouraged to attend the general training sessions and it was felt that an IDeA funded training course entitled 'Effective Ward Councillor', which had been held in Part 2 of the training programme, covered aspects of the Independent Member's request.
- Members agreed that it would be useful to have some information on the nature of the funding associated with the mentoring of Portfolio Holders. It was suggested that a general course outlining the role and responsibility of a Portfolio Holder could be considered for inclusion in the 2010/11 training programme. This could be for all Members and provide an overview of what was involved in being a Portfolio Holder. It was noted that, once appointed, Portfolio Holders have regular meetings with Council officers in the relevant service area. It was suggested that a further Effective Ward Councillor training course could be considered for inclusion in the 2010/11 training programme.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the proposals set out in Paragraph 3.3 of the report be agreed for inclusion in the Part 3 Member Development Programme 2009/10.
- (2) That, subject to the observations above, the development requests received from individual Members, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be endorsed.

- (3) That courses on the role and responsibility of a Portfolio Holder and the Effective Ward Councillor be considered for inclusion in the 2010/11 Member Learning and Development programme. (HICS)

### **7 MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT – INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA**

Members who had attended the above training course on 28 October 2009 provided verbal feedback on how well they felt the course had addressed the needs of Members.

It was felt generally that the course did not adequately cover the main issue that the Standards Committee wanted addressed, namely a set of guidelines advising Members of the 'do's and don't's' of the use of social media websites, to accord with Code of Conduct requirements.

The Committee discussed whether it would be useful to provide a further Member training course on this area but it was felt that some basic guidance notes for all Members might better address the issue.

It was agreed that any guidelines produced could be usefully circulated to Parish/Town Council Members via their clerks.

#### **Resolved**

That a guide be produced on the dangers/pitfalls of Social Media networking sites, to be circulated to all District Council Members, Members of the Standards Committee and Parish/Town Council clerks. (HICS/HLS)

### **8 FEEDBACK FROM THE 2009 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES 12-13 OCTOBER 2009**

Members received the report from the Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee, Cllr D Merrick, on the 2009 Annual Assembly of Standards Committees.

A further report from an Independent Member of the Committee, Mr M G Drage, who had also been in attendance at the Assembly, was circulated.

There was some discussion on a point raised at the Assembly around whether Independent Members of Standards Committees should serve for a fixed term only, whether there is any national standard relating to this and the terms of office associated with the Independent Members of Rochford District Council's Standards Committee. Although it was appreciated that a great deal of experience may be lost with fixed terms, the importance of preserving the independence of Independent Members was a factor.

**9      ASSESSMENT MADE CLEAR**

The DVD ‘Assessment Made Clear’ would be shown at the next scheduled meeting of the Committee.

The meeting closed at 9.08 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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