

## **Standards Committee – 10 July 2003**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **10 July 2003** when there were present:-

Cllr C C Langlands (Chairman)  
Cllr J M Pullen (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr T G Cutmore  
Cllr C A Hungate

Cllr C J Lumley

### **PARISH MEMBER**

Cllr M Steptoe, Barling Parish Council

### **INDEPENDENT MEMBERS**

Mr A C Comber  
Mr B F Flynn

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D J Cottis – Independent Member

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

R J Honey	-	Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration)
S Fowler	-	Head of Administrative and Member Services
J Bostock	-	Principal Committee Administrator

### **336 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **337 STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND – SECOND ANNUAL ASSEMBLY**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Legal Services on the outcome of the Second Annual Assembly.

Member attendees commented on the particular value of the workshops. Specific reference was made to the fact that, of around 3,500 complaints to the Standards Board during 2002, only half of the cases were judged to warrant investigation and, of those investigated, only about one fifth were found to be serious enough to refer to the Adjudication Panel. This statistic pointed to the value of clear and easy to follow guidelines being available to Standards Committees when they undertake the local investigation and determination of allegations. Committees would want to work to high standards.

The Committee agreed that, given the value of the Second Assembly, arrangements should be made for attendance at the next Assembly.

### **338 LOCAL INVESTIGATION AND DETERMINATION OF MISCONDUCT ALLEGATIONS**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) on the latest position with regard to regulations for the local investigation and determination of misconduct allegations.

Responding to Member questions, the Corporate Director advised that:-

- Ethical Standards Officers were appointed by the Standards Board.
- It would be for the Standards Committee to determine whether case information 'exempt' under the regulations should be considered in private session. There was a separate category of "confidential" information, which was given to the Council by a Government Department on terms which forbid its public disclosure.

During debate, Members concurred with the view of the Chairman that it would be appropriate to provide for the financial implications associated with the Committee's work. These included likely costings associated with a requirement to publish findings and attendance at the Annual Assembly/appropriate training.

#### **Resolved**

That provision for the financial costings associated with the Committee's work be included within the forthcoming budget process. (CD(LP&A))

### **339 MEMBER TRAINING PROGRAMME 2203/04**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services which provided details of the induction training programme and set out proposals for competency training.

Members undertook a detailed review of the proposed Competency Training Programme 2003/04. Observations were made as follows:-

#### Risk Management Training

It was agreed that, given its association with the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process, it would be appropriate for risk management training to be recommended for all Members to attend, rather than optional.

### Media Skills Training

It was agreed that it would be of value to highlight the reasons for the extensive nature of this training in communications with Members.

### New Licensing Functions Training

It was noted that this training programme had been timed in the daytime to combine with other Local Authorities. The training would be essential for Members of the Appeals and Licensing Committee.

There was some debate as to whether competency sessions should be categorised as essential, recommended or optional. Taking planning as an example, a Member referred to the fact that some Councillors would already have had a number of years experience/training and that all received training documentation. It should be apparent in practice if any training needs remained, and so the categories should remain as recommended or optional.

The Committee gave specific consideration to which training sessions could be appropriate for the Town/Parish Councils. It was recognised that, within Parish Councils, one Member often specialised in a particular area such as planning. In this regard, it would be appropriate to offer one place on each appropriate training session to Parish/Town Councils. Reference was made to the value of ascertaining likely Parish representation in advance of a session so that, if it proved necessary, an additional session could be arranged. It was also recognised that, should a Parish attendee feel that other members of the Parish would benefit from a session, the Parish Council could make direct arrangements with the training provider. There would be value in providing a brief synopsis of training session objectives to the Parish/Town Councils.

Whilst recognising that the latest training proposals built on the 2002/03 programme, Members felt that it would be of value to retain a facility for Chairmanship skills training. It was agreed that, if possible, for 2003/04 a session should be held between September and Christmas. With effect from next year, Chairmanship skills training should form part of the induction programme.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Induction Training Programme be noted.
- (2) That, subject to the above adjustments, the Competency Training Programme be agreed. (HAMS)

### 340 TRAINING VIDEO

The Committee considered a training video produced by the Standards Board for England. It was understood that a copy of the video had been sent to the Town/Parish Councils.

Members agreed that the video was particularly useful in identifying a number of pertinent scenarios and assisting understanding. It was a valuable training tool and should be included as appropriate within this years training programme for all Members.

Responding to Member questions, the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) advised that:-

- There are a number of views about conflicts of interest and the most appropriate make-up for Standards Committees. The position should be clear once guidance was published. Primary legislation would be required should the Government decide that Standards Committees should be made up of independent members only.
- Case scenarios continued to be available on the Standards Board and Adjudication Panel websites.
- Once sufficient copies were available, a copy of the latest booklet from the Standards Board for England would be supplied to all Members of the Council.

During debate Members agreed that it would be of value if Officers could report back to a future meeting on the possibilities of bespoke training for the Standards Committee. (CD(LPA))

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Chairman:.....

Date: .....