

Standards Committee – 8 April 2010

Minutes of the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **8 April 2010** when there were present:-

DISTRICT MEMBERS

Cllr D Merrick (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr P A Capon
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn
Cllr M J Steptoe

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Mr D J Cottis (Chairman)
Mr M G Drage
Mr S Shadbolt
Mrs L Walker

PARISH MEMBERS

Cllr P Beckers
Cllr Mrs D Constable

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs C I Black and Mrs L A Vingoe.

OFFICERS PRESENT

R J Honey	-	Corporate Director (Internal Services)
A Bugeja	-	Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

88 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, with the addition of an apology from Cllr Mrs Vingoe.

89 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr M J Steptoe declared a prejudicial interest in respect of Item 11 on the Agenda relating to a request from Barling Magna Parish Council for an extension to the dispensation granted in relation to modernisation to Barling Village Hall, by virtue of being a member of Barling Magna Parish Council, and left the meeting during its consideration. Mr D J Cottis declared a personal interest in the same item by virtue of being acquainted with Members of Barling Magna Parish Council.

90 ASSESSMENT MADE CLEAR

The Committee viewed the Standards for England 'Assessment Made Clear' DVD, which was designed to assist Standards Committee Members and local authority officers involved in the assessment of complaints about elected or co-opted Members.

91 2010 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES

The Committee considered Member attendance at the 2010 Annual Assembly of Standards Committees 'A Place for Standards' on 18 and 19 October 2010.

Discussion centred around the cost implications of representatives of the Council attending the Conference. In view of the forthcoming District Council elections, it was agreed that two delegate places should be provisionally reserved, with a final decision regarding whether to confirm the places, and to determine the Members to attend, to be made at the first meeting of the Standards Committee in the new Municipal Year.

Resolved

That a provisional booking be made for two places at the 2010 Annual Assembly of Standards Committees. (CD (IS))

92 LOCAL INVESTIGATIONS AND DETERMINATIONS – ANNUAL SUMMARY

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director (Internal Services) providing the notes of Assessment Sub-Committee meetings that have taken place since the last Standards Committee meeting, as well as an annual summary of hearings dealt with in the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

In respect of a suggestion that a training session be held for all Parish/Town Clerks on the Local Investigations and Determinations process, it was noted that this had been included as an Action in the Promoting Higher Standards Action Plan (see following Minute). It was further suggested that Rochford Hundred Association of Local Councils may feel it would be beneficial to include such a course in the training sessions they were currently organising for Parish/Town Clerks.

Resolved

- (1) That the Assessment Sub-Committee meeting updates be received.
- (2) That the Annual Summary of Local Investigations and Determinations for the 2009/10 Municipal Year be received. (CD(IS))

93 PROMOTING HIGHER STANDARDS – ACTION PLAN

Members reviewed the Action Plan (appended to the report of the Corporate Director (Internal Services)), comprising a programme of initiatives to promote

higher standards of behaviour within the Authority, which had been agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 1 October 2009.

The following points were noted:-

- From 1 June 2010 the Monitoring Officer would be Albert Bugeja.
- Page 9.3: the item 'Staff briefings to promote and raise awareness of standards issues' should be marked as 'Ongoing' instead of 'Annually'.
- Page 9.4: with reference to the item 'Meet top people', the Council's Chief Executive would be attending the next Standards Committee meeting to present views on standards to the Committee and to be available for questions. Senior Members and officers would be invited to future meetings, beginning with the Council's Head of Planning and Transportation.
- Page 9.5: in respect of the action to provide a training session for Parish Clerks, a date was yet to be confirmed.

Resolved

That the revised Action Plan be endorsed, subject to the amendments detailed above. (CD(IS))

94 MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT 2010/11

Members considered the report of the Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services on the proposals for the Member Learning and Development Programme for 2010/11.

During discussion, the following was observed:-

- Paragraph 4.9: the Council's external auditors, PKF, will be running an induction session in May aimed primarily at Members of the Audit Committee. This will replace the proposed Media Awareness training, which will be held later in the year. The Ethical Framework/Code of Conduct course will be held in June.
- Thanks were given to officers for their work on producing the Guide for Candidates on being a Member of Rochford District Council, which had been given to all prospective candidates.
- It was requested that it be made clear in correspondence that Parish/Town Clerks were included in the invitation to Parish/Town Councils to attend Member training, subject to availability of places.
- Concern was expressed that only 32 out of the 39 self-assessment questionnaires had been returned. The Committee felt it would be useful

that all Members be reminded of the importance of completing and returning the annual self-assessment forms.

Resolved

- (1) That the summary of Members' attendance at training sessions during the Municipal Year 2009/10 as set out in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.3 of the report be received.
- (2) That the proposals for the Member Learning and Development Programme for 2010/11, as set out in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.16 of the report, be endorsed, with the amendment that Media Awareness training be replaced with training for Members of the Audit Committee.
- (3) That Members be reminded of the importance of completing and returning the annual Learning and Development self-assessment forms. (HLEMS)

95 REQUEST FOR DISPENSATION – BARLING MAGNA PARISH COUNCIL

(Note: Cllr M J Steptoe left the room during consideration of this item.)

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director (Internal Services) in respect of a request from Barling Magna Parish Council for a two-year extension to the dispensation to allow decisions to be taken by its Members on all matters concerning modernisation of Barling Village Hall, which was granted on 12 March 2008.

It was agreed that dispensation be extended for a further twelve months and that the Council's Monitoring Officer should contact the Parish Clerk to discuss way of resolving the situation so that the matter does not have to continue to be brought before the Committee.

Resolved

That the dispensation granted to Barling Magna Parish Council to allow decisions to be taken by its Members on all matters concerning modernisation to Barling Village Hall be extended for a further twelve months. (CD(IS))

As it would be the Monitoring Officer John Honey's last Standards Committee meeting, the Chairman thanked him for all his work for the Standards Committee and wished him a happy retirement.

The meeting closed at 9.07 pm.

Chairman

Date

If you would like these minutes in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.