

Standards Committee – 2 October 2008

Minutes of the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **2 October 2008** when there were present:-

Chairman: Mr D J Cottis (Independent Member)

Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr D Merrick

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Mr S Shadbolt
Mrs L Walker

PARISH MEMBERS

Cllr P Beckers
Cllr Mrs D Constable
Cllr Mrs L A Vingoe

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr P A Capon and Mr M G Drage.

OFFICERS PRESENT

A Bugeja - Head of Legal Services
S Fowler - Head of Information and Customer Services
M Power - Committee Administrator

278 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

279 PROCEDURE RULES FOR LOCAL INVESTIGATION AND DETERMINATION OF CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Internal Services) on a procedure for dealing with the assessment, review and hearing of complaints that a Member may have breached the Code of Conduct.

In considering the revised draft of the Procedure Rules for Local Investigation and Determination of Complaints, it was agreed that the following amendments be made:-

- On page 6.3 of Appendix 1 the second paragraph under 'Interpretation' be amended to read 'Investigator means the Monitoring Officer or deputy Monitoring Officer or person appointed by either of them to carry out an investigation under these procedure rules'.

- On page 6.8 of Appendix 1 the wording in paragraph 25 be amended to read, 'Any sanction imposed shall commence immediately following its imposition by the Committee and service of notice as hereinafter provided except', etc.

It was noted that the role of the Monitoring Officer is to manage the complaints process and to advise the Standards Committee when a complaint concerning a breach of the code has been received. The Monitoring Officer has no power of investigation until the assessment sub-committee is satisfied that the complaint should be referred for local investigation. Although it was noted that the wording of paragraph 1 under the Local Investigation of Complaint heading on page 6.3 of Appendix 1 was a general statement that outlined the Monitoring Officer's statutory duty, in order to address Members' concern over clarity of meaning, it was agreed that the wording be reviewed by the Monitoring Officer and amended as appropriate.

It was noted that the complainant would be formally notified of their right to ask for a review of a decision by an assessment sub-committee to take no action on a complaint.

Resolved

That the Procedure Rules for Local Investigation and Determination of Complaints Concerning the Members' Code of Conduct, as appended, be adopted, subject to clarification of wording of paragraph 1 under Local Investigation of Complaint on page 6.3 of Appendix 1 and amendments on pages 6.3 and 6.8 of Appendix 1. (CD(IS))

280 MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2008/09 – MID PROGRAMME REVIEW/CHARTER/DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

Members considered the report of the Head of Information & Customer Services containing the mid-programme review of the 2008/09 Member Training Programme, discussing the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) Charter for Member Development and considering Member attendance at planning training sessions.

In respect of the EERA Charter for Member Development, it was noted:-

- That an objective of the Charter was that Member Development programmes would focus on training that was linked to the corporate objectives and business of the Council.
- That although the Council could consider that it already sets a high standard for Member Training and Development and meets a number of the requirements, working towards the Charter would enable additional focus and importance to be given to Member training and development.

- It was agreed that it would be appropriate for two Independent Members of the Standards Committee to be appointed to the Sub-Committee to be established to oversee and lead on the process of applying for EERA Charter status.

The Committee discussed the issue of Member attendance at planning-related training sessions. The following points were raised:-

- As part of planning training it was suggested that specific training be provided on the subject of planning grounds for approval or refusal of a planning application.
- It was thought that it should be mandatory that Members of the Licensing Committee receive appropriate licensing training prior to participating in Licensing hearings.
- Reference to the requirements of mandatory planning training should be 'subject to the availability of training'.
- If adopted by Council, further information was necessary on how the requirement that Members attend two planning-related training sessions and that Licensing Committee Members receive appropriate training will be implemented and enforced.

Resolved

- (1) That the 2008/09 Mid-Programme Review be noted.
- (2) That a commitment towards achieving the Charter for elected Member Development be made.
- (3) That a Sub-Committee be established for the purpose of overseeing and leading on the process of applying for Charter accreditation comprising:-
 - The Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee (Chairman of Sub-Committee).
 - The Leader of the Conservative Group.
 - The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group.
 - Two other interested elected Members.
 - Two Independent Members of the Standards Committee: Mr D J Cottis and Mrs L Walker. (HICS)

Recommended to Council

- (1) That attendance at two planning training sessions totalling 4 hours a year, or the making of alternative training arrangements with officers if unable to attend scheduled sessions, be a mandatory requirement of membership of the Development Control Committee in the next municipal year.
- (2) That it be mandatory that Members of the Licensing Committee receive appropriate licensing training prior to participating in Licensing hearings in the next municipal year.
- (3) That further information be provided relating to how the mandatory requirement that Members attend two planning-related training sessions and that Licensing Committee Members receive appropriate training be implemented, taking into account the availability of training, and enforced. (HICS)

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm.

Chairman

Date

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