

STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 17 July 2002

Minutes of the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **17 July 2002** when there were present:

Cllr T G Cutmore (Chairman)

Cllr C C Langlands
Cllr R G S Choppen

Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr Mrs M S Vince

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Mr A C Comber
Mr O Richards

OFFICERS PRESENT

R J Honey – Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration)
S Fowler – Head of Administrative & Member Services
M Martin – Committee Administrator

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr M Steptoe – Great Wakering Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed the Independent Members to the meeting.

335 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Cllr T G Cutmore declared a personal interest by virtue of being the Vice-Chairman of the Rochford Hundred Association of Essex Councils.

336 PROGRAMME OF WORK

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration) which outlined for Members matters to be considered by the Standards Committee and included a proposed programme of work for 2002/3.

Members noted that:-

- all Members of the District Council had signed up to the Code of Conduct and completed Declarations of Interest. One Parish Council had still to confirm adoption of the Code and a response was expected shortly.
- The Council had recently responded to a consultation document from the Government relating to how Standards Committees and the Standards Board of England should function in the future. A communication had been received indicating that the comments of this Council would be noted. The outcome of the consultation could have a significant effect on the working of the Standards Committee and further information was expected by early Autumn.

In addition to the consideration of any ad-hoc issues that might arise with regard to the standard of conduct of Members at either district or parish level, the Standards Committee had also been tasked with the following responsibilities.

Training for Members in codes of conduct and general competency

Members noted that a session on the Code of Conduct had been held as part of the induction training for new Councillors and was covered by an item later on the agenda.

Specialist training for the Standards Committee

Given that the role of the Committee could change following the consultation on new regulations, Members agreed that any requirement for specialist training should be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

In the meantime it was agreed that a copy of the Constitution and a Member diary should be provided to the Parish and Independent Members, together with information concerning the functions of the different tiers of Parish, District and County Councils.

Members' Remuneration

A report on the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

Monitoring of Members' attendance at meetings and training sessions

Following discussions, it was agreed that the Corporate Director should produce some suggestions for effective monitoring of attendance for the next meeting of the Committee.

Parish liaison

Members agreed that the Corporate Director should write on behalf of the Committee to all Parish/Town Clerks thanking them for their support so far and inviting them to give their views on how the Committee could best assist them in the future.

Resolved

That a work programme be commenced on the basis outlined. (CD(LPA))

337 MEMBER TRAINING

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) which considered how Members should be trained in the requirements of the new Code of Conduct and competency training generally and how the Standards Committee might evaluate the effectiveness of this training.

Members noted that a key role of the Standards Committee would be to ensure that members are properly trained in the requirements of the National Code. In addition the Council has included a requirement that the Standards Committee should determine the minimum level of competency training for Members.

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The Committee noted the results of the questionnaire which had been sent to Members and which had included a survey of training requirements. A list of suggested training sessions had been included in the report.

In agreeing the outline programme, Members of the Committee observed that:-

- emergency planning training should include advising Councillors on how they should react personally in the event that an emergency situation arose within the District.
- training for Members around the type of leisure services offered within the District would be more appropriate than the Leisure Contract itself which is monitored by the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- training in communication skills could be given consideration.
- the Independent and Parish Members of the Committee should be invited to attend a further session of induction training on the Ethical Framework along with those Councillors who had been unable to attend the earlier session.
- in support of the view of Members, approximately two thirds of the training sessions should be held at the Civic Suite and one third at the Freight House, depending on the type of training.

Resolved

- (1) that the following subjects should be arranged as early as possible in the training programme:-

Overview and Scrutiny
Chairmanship Skills
Strategic Context
Emergency Planning

- (2) that training sessions should commence from 18 September 2002.
- (3) that further meetings of the Standards Committee be held on 23 October and 27 November 2002. (CD(LPA))

The meeting ended at 9 pm.

Chairman

Date