



Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held at the Bourges/Viersen Room - Town Hall
on 10 June 2009

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Steve Boast (Chairman), Anne Smith (Vice-Chairman), David Whiles, Brenda Fearon and Orlando Menendez
Councillors M Todd, N Khan, K Sharp, W Trueman and P Croft
Parish Councillors Denis Batty and Ron Nesbitt

OFFICERS PRESENT:

Helen Edwards, Solicitor to the Council
Alex Daynes, Senior Governance Officer

1. Election of Chairman

The committee re-elected Steve Boast as Chairman (nominated by David Whiles and seconded by Denis Batty). No other nominations were received.

The committee elected Anne Smith as vice-Chairman (nominated by Brenda Fearon and seconded by Ron Nesbitt).

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Scott, Cllr Miners and Cllr Fower.

3. Declaration of Interests (if any)

Cllrs Todd and Sharp declared that they were members of the Planning and Environmental Protection Committee.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2009 were approved as a true and accurate record.

The committee **AGREED** for the Chairman, Steve Boast, to negotiate with the new Leader of the Council, Cllr Cereste, to approve the introduction of briefing sessions on Standards issues before each Council meeting.

5. Monitoring Officer's Report

The committee received the Monitoring Officer's report and was requested to note its contents including; the annual report to the Standards Board, consider the analysis of

complaints for local elected members compared to national statistics, note the revised Standards regulations, agree the future work programme and consider the Planning Committee voting analysis.

5.1 Actions from last meeting

The Committee noted the actions since the last meeting.

5.2 Referrals / Complaints

The Monitoring Officer advised the committee that more work could be done to promote the work of the Standards Committee for Council Members and the public. Members of the committee commented that it was important to demonstrate to the public that local Councillors, unlike Members of Parliament, were governed by a code of conduct.

Members discussed ways to promote the work of the committee within Peterborough including local press and Council publications. The level of controls over allowances for local Members could be highlighted in relation to the current situation facing many MPs.

Members **RESOLVED** to produce a press release to provide members of the public with information about the procedures followed for complaints and the work of the Standards Committee in general. The article could include data from the annual report on complaints to highlight the numbers being dealt with.

The committee discussed ways for the chairman to engage with the political Leadership of the Council. The committee **AGREED** to recommend the chairman continue attendance at Council meetings to engage with Councillors and Council leaders.

The Solicitor to the Council advised the committee that one particular complaint had been ongoing for a long time due to legal issues raised.

The Committee discussed the statistics for Peterborough compared to national statistics contained in the report. The committee were satisfied that Peterborough had performed satisfactorily for the complaints it had received.

Members **RESOLVED** that training should be provided for all new members of the committee on Standards issues. This would also serve as a refresher to previous members.

The committee **AGREED** with the Chairman's suggestion that all cases considered by the sub committees should remain confidential and the information exempt until resolution of the cases or until the subject of the complaint allows publication.

Members of the committee discussed rotating the chairmanship for sub committees. The committee **AGREED** that all independent Members should begin to chair sub committees following relevant training.

5.3 Revised Standards Regulations

Committee members were asked to consider the possibility of establishing a joint standards committee with another Authority and were advised that South Cambridgeshire had approached Peterborough as a possible partner. Following discussion, members of the committee **RESOLVED** to consider the approach from South Cambridgeshire but investigate other options too.

5.4 Agenda Plan

Members were advised that 12-18 October 2009 was a European wide Local Democracy Week and were asked to suggest activities the Standards Board could participate in.

It was suggested to hold a mock trial of a Councillor and use examples of previous cases from the Standards Board for England to do this. Committee members expressed a desire to involve young people in an event too. The committee **RESOLVED** to participate in the Local Democracy Week and to involve the new Area Committee members too.

Committee members requested that information on mediation training was included on the work programme and also the details and draft of a press release promoting the work of the Standards Board.

5.5 Planning Committee Voting Analysis

The committee expressed no causes for concern over the voting analysis from 3 March 2009 to 28 April 2009.

6. **Agenda Planning**

The committee **AGREED** to retain the date of 8 July as a provisional meeting date.

The committee **AGREED** to hold sub-committee assessment panels through August if necessary.

A letter would be sent to members of the committee requesting interest in attending the Standards Board conference to be held 12-13 October 2009.

7. **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting is 8 July 2009 (provisional) and 9 September 2009.

CHAIRMAN
7.00 - 8.00 pm