

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held at the Forli Room - Town Hall
on 18 March 2009

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr S Boast (Chairman), Mr D Whiles (Vice-Chairman), Mr O Menendez, Ms A Smith and Ms B Fearon
Councillors A Miners, G Murphy and M Todd
Parish Councillors Batty and Evans

OFFICERS PRESENT:

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

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Todd declared an interest as Chair of the Planning and Environmental Protection Committee.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2009 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. Monitoring Officer's Report

4.1 Actions Since Last Meeting

The Committee noted that its response had been submitted regarding Local Authority Publicity and the Code of Conduct for Members and Employees by the deadline of 12 March 2009.

4.2 Referrals / Complaints

The Committee **AGREED** to receive the first Annual Return - to analyse complaints – at its next meeting, rather than have an update on complaints before submission of the Annual Return.

4.3 Work Programme

4.3.1 CRB Checks for elected Members

The Committee was advised that following the Joint Area Review of Haringey Children's Services, recommendations were made to apply for Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks for officers and Members following risk assessments of their roles. A draft decision notice was circulated to the Committee for comment.

The Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that a risk assessment test for a single role had taken only a few minutes in a test case and therefore it would be practical and cost effective to carry out the risk assessments within the council.

It was **AGREED** for the draft decision notice to be referred to Cabinet.

It was **RESOLVED** to receive an update on CRB checks to be brought back to the Committee in 6 months.

4.3.2 Annual Report to Council

Members reviewed a draft copy of the Annual Report to Council to agree the contents. Following discussion, members made the following comments:

- (i) Paragraph 3 – needs to be clearer that the Board has legislation to abide by in order to create a sense of “ethical wellbeing”.
- (ii) Paragraph 5 – include the decision to conduct in-house assessments of roles for CRB instead of an external agency to highlight cost savings.
- (iii) Paragraph 7 – amend the section, “at the start of *each* Council meeting”, to indicate that not all Council meetings would have to have a briefing e.g. “a number of meetings” or “where appropriate”.

Members discussed the proposal to include a 20 minutes briefing session on Standards issues at the beginning of Council meetings. It was felt that as more Councillors attended Council than other meetings, this would enable more Councillors to be exposed to briefings. The Chairman agreed to further engage group Leaders on Standards issues.

The Monitoring Officer provided information for the Committee on recognition awards for good practise in Standards. Members agreed that the Standards function had improved over recent years and many causes of the awards that other Councils had received were already taking place in Peterborough.

During further discussion, the following issues were recommended for inclusion in the Council report:

- (i) A determination that the Committee will review any cases that comes before it.
- (ii) A summary of the work programme for the year ahead.
- (iii) A summary of Parish Council engagement with Standards Committee.

The Committee **AGREED** the content of the annual report subject to the comments noted above.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Continue to improve the Standards function.
- (ii) Continue engagement with Group Leaders.
- (iii) Develop awareness of the role of the Standards Committee in public places such as libraries.

4.3.3 Future Work Items

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Establish a sub-group to discuss Local Democracy Week with Councillor M Dalton – to be made up of Anne Smith, Brenda Fearon and Steve Boast.
- (ii) Include the first 6 monthly CRB check in the January 2010 agenda.
- (iii) Engage Peterborough Association of Local Councils (PALC) in Standards issues.
- (iv) Invite the Standards Board for England and other Standards Committees to discuss and share best practise at meetings.
- (v) Raise Standards issues at Group Leaders meetings.
- (vi) Review the Officer Wellbeing policy.
- (vii) Engage Licensing Committee on Standards issues.

Following further discussion Members **AGREED** to the schedule of meetings and the inclusion of provisional dates.

4.4 Planning Committee Voting Analysis

The committee noted the contents of the voting analysis for September 2008 to 17 February 2009 and requested a further report be submitted in three months.

5. **Date of Next Meeting (prov. 22 April 2009)**

Members **AGREED** not to hold a meeting on 22 April 2009 unless important business was submitted for it to consider.

CHAIRMAN
7.00 - 7.45 pm

This page is intentionally left blank