

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

12th November 2007

PRESENT:-

District Council Members

Councillors Bale and Timms (Conservative Group) and Councillor Mrs. Mead (Labour Group).

Parish Member

Mrs. C. Barker (Barrow-on-Trent).

Independent Members

Mr. R. Pearson, Mr. P. B. Purnell, Mr. T. Thompson and Mr. D. R. Williams.

SC/1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED:-

That Mr. D. R. Williams be appointed Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

SC/2. **APOLOGY**

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Mrs. H. M. Scott-South (Melbourne Parish Council).

SC/3. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED:-

That Mr. P. B. Purnell be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

SC/4. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th March 2007 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

SC/5. **REGISTERS OF INTERESTS**

It was reported that following the District and Parish elections on 3rd May 2007, all newly-elected and re-elected District Councillors had completed a new form in respect of the necessary declarations on the Register of Interests. These declarations were undertaken within 28 days of the Councillor completing their Declaration of Acceptance of Office, as required.

With regard to Parish Councillors, a letter was sent to Parish Clerks following the elections advising them to undertake the same action outlined above in respect of their Councillors. It was noted that the Parish Clerk was the Proper Officer for ensuring all Parish Councillors completed the relevant form but Clerks had been requested to forward copies of the documents to the Monitoring Officer to provide a complete record of Parish declarations.

RESOLVED:-

That details of the monitoring undertaken on the Registers of Interest for District and Parish Councillors since the elections on 3rd May 2007 be noted.

SC/6. **TRAINING**

The Committee received details of training sessions provided since the elections on 3rd May 2007. As part of the Induction Programme arranged for all Members of the District Council following the elections, a session on the ethical framework and the revised Code of Conduct was held on 10th May 2007. Refresher sessions were then held for all Members on 25th and 31st October 2007. The Chairman of the Standards Committee, together with two newly co-opted Members of the Committee and Officers attended a training session on standards and the revised Code of Conduct at North West Leicestershire District Council on 25th September 2007. Training sessions were held for District Councillors on the yearly Planning Update on 17th May 2007 and on the Liquor Licensing function on 4th July 2007. It was intended to hold a seminar for all Members before the end of the year on planning procedures and protocols.

Parish Councillor Mrs. Barker expressed concern at the lack of training opportunities provided for Parish Councillors and felt that evening sessions needed to be organised in conjunction with the Derbyshire Association of Local Councils, rather than making a presentation at the next Parish Liaison Meeting, when the agenda may be too congested to accommodate the matter properly.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That details of the training sessions provided since the elections on 3rd May 2007 be noted.***
- (2) That the possibility of organising separate training sessions on the revised Code for Parish Councillors be investigated in conjunction with the Derbyshire Association of Local Councils.***

SC/7. **SIXTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES – 15TH AND 16TH OCTOBER 2007**

It was reported that the sixth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees held at the ICC, Birmingham on 15th and 16th October 2007 had been attended by Dudley Williams (Chairman of the Committee), Andrea McCaskie (Monitoring Officer) and Neil Betteridge (Democratic Services Manager).

A copy of the final programme was attached to the report and details of the conference materials from the various sessions could be downloaded from the Standards Board for England's website.

A report prepared by Mr. Williams was also attached and the Monitoring Officer reported that the main topic of discussion related to new regulations which would provide for all complaints to be considered first by local Standards Committees with effect from 1st April 2008.

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

SC/8. **DVD – THE CODE UNCOVERED**

It was reported that the Standards Board for England had produced a guidance DVD entitled 'The Code Uncovered', which used a fictional planning application dispute to illustrate the key changes to the revised Model Code of Conduct. The DVD examined the rules about declaring interests, disclosing confidential information and bullying. The DVD was of particular value to new and continuing Councillors who wished to increase their understanding of certain parts of the Code of Conduct.

The Standards Board had recommended that the DVD was watched by Standards Committee Members and used as a tool for discussion. The programme featured learning points which appeared throughout the drama and these sections identified key elements to consider when following the rules governing Members' behaviour.

Members of the Committee viewed the DVD, which was considered very useful.

RESOLVED:-

That Members of the District Council be requested to view this DVD, possibly at the seminar on planning procedures and protocols referred to in Minute No. SC/6 above.

D. R. WILLIAMS

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 7.10 p.m.