

WEST WILTSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the: **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Held on: **TUESDAY 12 DECEMBER 2006**

Held in: **THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, BRADLEY ROAD
TROWBRIDGE**

Present:

District Council Representatives: Cllr Manasseh

External Representatives: Tony Frost (Chairman) and Dr Kurt Paulus

Town/Parish Representatives: Cllrs Peter Leach and Horace Prickett

Also Present Cllr Russell Hawker

Officers: Solicitor (GC), Member Support Officer (MS) and Democratic Support Officer (KF)

56. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Ernie Clark and Sophie Farkas.

57. MINUTES

The minutes of the last Standards Committee meeting held on 19 October were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

59. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- Melanie Stimpson, Member Support Officer would be leaving the Council at Christmas to work for another Authority. The Committee thanked her for her hard work and wished her well in her new position.
- A meeting of the Independent Standards Committee Members Forum had been held on 27 October 2006.

60. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE WORK OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE - DRAFT

The Chairman presented the draft of the Standards Committee Annual Report and asked the Standards Committee to discuss and consider any revisions it would like to make.

The Committee asked that the following changes be made: -

- That the composition of the Committee be corrected
- That the Chairman writes an additional paragraph detailing the difficulties concerned with the Local Determination Hearing, the process and any conclusions.

61. REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNCIL

The Solicitor, George Curran, presented a report which purpose was to consider a more detailed and focussed phase of consultation, as well as to decide how to consult with political groups within the Council and the Councillors who are not members of a political group.

At its meeting on 19 July 2006, the Standards Committee adopted a timescale for the review process. The benefit of adopting the timetable was that if there were any remaining issues, they could be dealt with by the Standards Committee at its meeting on 21 March.

At the request of the Standards Committee Chairman a letter was sent to all Councillors inviting them to identify any aspect of the Constitution that they thought required consideration. As a result one such issue had been identified which related to the period of notice required for the submission of questions to Council.

In addition officers had been compiling a record of issues that have come to light since the Constitution was adopted.

The Scrutiny Committee had been notified of the Standards Committee intention of reviewing the constitution and had therefore established a Task and Finish

Group to deal with the Constitution. It was noted that the membership of this Group was Cllrs Manasseh, Bower and Hawker.

RESOLVED:

The Standards Committee

- **Agree that there be a process of consultation with the Leader of the Council; the Leaders of the Political Groups and the ungrouped Councillors; and with the Planning and Scrutiny Committees; (The Solicitor to draft this on behalf of the Chairman).**
- **Agree that the Chairman and Vice Chairman identify the issues to be referred to the Planning and Scrutiny Committees; (in the absence of the Vice Chairman, it should be the remaining independent member)**
- **That the Chairman and Dr Kurt Paulus engage in the consultation process with the Leader of the Council, Leaders of the Political Groups and the ungrouped members, if necessary;**
- **Agree that officers be asked to facilitate the consultation processes set out at (c) above.**

62. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme and agreed the additional item; -

- The Future of the Standards Committee

The Chairman asked that members of the Committee forward views they may have on this item to him by 16 January. He would then collate these and forward to Nicola Mathiason.

The revised Code of Conduct had been an item on the work programme for some time and members asked for any progress on this issue. The Solicitor explained that the reason for the delay in the consultation process was not known.

RESOLVED:

Members agreed the following priority order for the workplan: -

Matter of Decision	Date of Meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of the Constitution of the Council• Annual Report of the work of the Standards Committee – Approval• The Future of the Standards Committee (including a framework for reviewing the Constitution)• Implications Following the Letter of Response from the Standards Board for England	1 February 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participation in the public consultation on the revised Code of Conduct	PENDING

62. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting of the Standards Committee had been arranged for **Thursday 1 February 2007 at 7.00pm in The Council Chamber**, at the Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge.

(7.00pm – 7.45pm)

These minutes were prepared by Melanie Stimpson; Member Support Officer who can be contacted on 01225 770322 or email mstimpson@westwiltshire.gov.uk.