

## WEST WILTSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MINUTES

Minutes of the: **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Held on: **WEDNESDAY 7 JUNE 2006**

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

Present:

District Council Representatives: Cllrs Ernie Clark, Marion Clegg and Eli Manasseh

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

Town/Parish Representatives: Mary Stacey

Also Present Cllrs Trevor Carbin (pt), Gordon Cox (pt), Christopher Newbury (pt) and Bill Viles

Officers: Solicitor (GC), Policy and Scrutiny Officer (ML) (pt) and Member Support Officer (MS)

#### **28 ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN 2006/2007**

The Solicitor called for nominations for the position of Chairman of the Standards Committee.

Tony Frost was proposed by Councillor Manasseh and seconded by Councillor Stacey

There being no other nominations and on being put to the vote it was

**RESOLVED: That Tony Frost be elected Chairman of the Standards Committee for 2006/07**

#### **29. APPOINTMENT OF THE VICE CHAIRMAN 2006/2007**

The Chairman called for nominations for the position of Vice Chairman of the Standards Committee.

Keith West was proposed by Councillor Stacey and seconded by Councillor Manasseh.

There being no other nominations and on being put to the vote it was

**RESOLVED: That Keith West be appointed Vice Chairman of the Standards Committee for 2006/07.**

**30. APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Cllrs Sophie Farkas and Horace Prickett.

**31. MINUTES**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 26 April 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

**33. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made no announcements.

**34. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer presented a report providing the Committee with details of the Councils complaints procedure and the monitoring which had taken place since November 2005.

In November the complaints procedure was updated and streamlined after a number of problems had been identified. The complaint process now had three main stages (Stages 1, 2 and 3) and externally there was the Local Government Ombudsman.

Currently only Stage 2 and 3 complaints are monitored. Comprehensive monitoring information would be available for Stage 1 complaints once the Customer Relationship Management system was fully operational.

Following questions from the committee, the Policy and Scrutiny Officer explained that most complaints commence at Stage 1. Stage 1 complaints are dealt with within the particular service area and at Stage 2, Service Managers would be aware of any complaint made at Stage 1.

The Corporate Complaints process does not deal with complaints about the conduct of a member. These complaints are referred directly to the Standards Board for England. If the target timescale for responding to a complaint could not be attained the complainant would be kept informed of its progress.

**RESOLVED:**

- **That the Standards Committee notes the report and;**
- **A report updating the Standards Committee be presented every quarter.**

**35. STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND – CODE OF CONDUCT – STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE**

OPEN FORUM: MR. F. MORLAND

The Solicitor informed the Committee that the Code of Conduct was changing and that government had announced its intention to introduce a clearer, more proportionate Code. Members of the Committee were presented with the Standards Board for England's conclusions of how the Code of Conduct should be amended.

The Standards Committee would be able to participate and offer feedback during the consultation on the revised Code of Conduct which would take place towards the end of June/July 2006 with regulations being produced in October 2006. The revised Code of Conduct would come into operation in May 2007 and be accompanied by new guidelines.

The Standards Board for England was keen for complaints concerning members conduct to be dealt with at local level and local authorities were informed that there would be no financial obligations incurred. The Standards Committee was concerned as Local Determination Hearings (LDH) create much work for the Standards Committees, Officers and also takes Officers away from regular duties.

The Standards Committee also required further development to improve on experience for future LDH.

**RESOLVED:**

**That a report be prepared and presented to the Standards Committee regarding Local Determination Hearings - including the cost and long term implications in relation to the role of the Standards Committee and;  
The estimated cost to the District Council of the recent Local Determination Hearing.**

**36 GRANTING DISPENSATIONS**

The Committee had received a report concerning the methodology for granting dispensations at its meeting on 26 April. The Committee requested a further report to provide information in relation to the consideration of applications for dispensations and the issues to be taken into account.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Standards Committee notes the report, and  
That Parish and Town Clerks and Chairman be made aware of the reports**

**37 PROCEDURAL REVIEW OF LOCAL DETERMINATION HEARING**

The Committee reviewed the Local Determination Hearing and had a discussion based on the feedback the Solicitor had received from Tony Frost and Kurt Paulus.

The Committee felt that there should be a role-play training session regarding the conduct of a local determination hearing for the benefit of Members who may sit on the adjudication panel.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Standards Committee be provided with a copy of the final notification issued to the subject members.**

**38 WORK PROGRAMME**

**RESOLVED:**

**Members agreed the following priority order for the workplan: -**

<b>Matter of Decision</b>	<b>Date of Meeting</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Annual Report by the Standards Board for England – a look at the variety of complaints received and the way investigations into complaints was conducted</li><li>• Consider how the Standards Committee shall monitor performance of the Constitution</li></ul>	19 July 2006

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and assess the role of Standards Committee member and how the Standards Committee is performing against these roles</li> </ul>	19 October 2006
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Report of the work of the Standards Committee</li> </ul>	1 February 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in the public consultation on the revised Code of Conduct – expected towards the end of June/July 2006</li> </ul>	PENDING

### 39 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next scheduled meeting of the Standards Committee had been arranged for **Wednesday 19 July 2006** at **7.00pm** in **The Council Chamber**, at the Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge.

(7.00pm – 8.40 pm)

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

