

Standards Committee

Minutes

20 September 2004
Committee Room 2
Bourne Hill, Salisbury
Commencing at 2.00 pm

71. **Present:**

Mrs M F Lewis (Chairman and Independent Person), Mr R Job (Vice-Chairman and Independent Person), Councillors C G Mills and J B Hooper (replacing Cllr B R Rycroft) and Mr M Chandler (Parish Representative).

In attendance: Mr R G Crook (Deputy Parish Representative), Susan Tovey (Monitoring Officer/Legal Services Officer) and Mr P J Bellas (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

Apologies: Cllrs B R Rycroft and J Walsh.

72. **Public Question/Statement Time:**

There were none.

73. **Minutes:**

Agreed: that the minutes of the last meeting held on 19th July 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

74. **Declarations of Interest:**

There were no declarations of interest.

75. **Complaints to the Standards Board for England:**

Consideration was given to the reports of the Legal Services Manager/Monitoring Officer (previously circulated as Agenda Items 5a – 5c).

Agreed:

- (1) that the reports be noted; and
- (2) that the Legal Services Manager/Monitoring Officer write to the Standards Board:
 - (a) to express the Committee's concerns that councillors are not advised immediately when a complaint against them is received, and to recommend that, in order for councillors to make preparations for any subsequent investigation while events are still fresh in their minds, a procedure to do so be introduced on the understanding that there will be no correspondence on the matter until the way forward has been determined; and
 - (b) to request that reasons given by the Standards Board for not investigating complaints be both positive and definitive for the avoidance of doubt.

76. **Register of Members' Interests On-line:**

Consideration was given to the report of the Legal Services Manager/Monitoring Officer (previously circulated).

Agreed –

- (1) that the Register of Interests be not published on-line as satisfactory arrangements for public scrutiny exist at present; and
- (2) that the relevant page on the Council's website be amended to make it clear that all Councillors have registered their interests.

77. Work Programme:

The Committee identified the following matters for consideration over the next two years:

- ♦ Training on the new regulations concerning the local investigation of allegations of misconduct.
- ♦ A review of the Councillors' Codes of Conduct and the Constitution.
- ♦ An update and review of the present situation on the ethical standards framework.
- ♦ The consideration of matters arising from the annual letters prepared by the Council's Auditors.
- ♦ The consideration of recommendations arising from the annual review of members' allowances by the Independent Remuneration Panel.
- ♦ Any relevant matters arising from the review of the Council's corporate governance arrangements.
- ♦ The outcome of the business process re-engineering of the complaints system.
- ♦ Review of the whistleblowing procedure.
- ♦ Further county-wide meetings of Standards Committee members to discuss developments and best practice

Agreed –

- (1) that the officers prepare a timetable for the consideration of the matters listed above and any other matters which appear regularly before the Committee for discussion at the next meeting; and
- (2) that the protocol governing the demarcation of jurisdiction between the Standards Board and Ombudsman be circulated to Members of the Committee for information.

78. Independent Members Forum:

Although this matter did not appear on the agenda for the meeting the Chairman decided to take it as a matter of urgency.

The Legal Services Manager/Monitoring Officer reported that a meeting of the Independent Members of Standards Committees from Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire would be held on 15th October 2004 at the offices of Swindon Borough Council.

The meeting concluded at 3.15 pm