

Standards Committee

Minutes

17th January 2005
Committee Room 2
Bourne Hill, Salisbury
Commencing at 2.00 pm

88. **Present:**

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

In attendance: Mr R Crook (Deputy Parish Representative), Mr J Crawford (Head of Legal and Property Services/Monitoring Officer) and Mr P J Bellas (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

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

There were none.

90. **Minutes:**

Agreed: that the minutes of the last meeting held on [18th October 2004](#) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

91. **Declarations of Interest:**

There were no declarations of interest with regard to the matters to be discussed at the meeting.

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

Consideration was given to the [report \(a\)](#) and [report \(b\)](#) and [report \(c\)](#) of the Monitoring Officer (previously circulated).

The Committee noted that further information had been provided to the Standards Board with regard to the complaint set out under Appendix 5c and that a new summary report had been issued. The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that he would be bringing a report on this matter to the next meeting for consideration.

Agreed:

(1) that the reports be noted;

(2) that the Monitoring Officer be requested to:

- (a) write to the Standards Board to seek an explanation of the circumstances which led the Ethical Standards Officer to find that no further action was needed in case SBE4034.03 due to the precedent that may be set;
- (b) publish a case review of the number and types of complaints to the Standards Board for the District on a six monthly basis; and
- (c) investigate the possibility of incorporating training on the code of conduct in the event for parish councillors being organised by Development Services for 8th July 2005.

93. **Amended Draft Work Programme:**

Further to minute 85 (18/10/04) the Committee considered the [amended work programme](#) (previously circulated).

Agreed:

- (1) that the report be noted; and
- (2) that the Officers be requested to circulate a copy of the Annual Audit Letter to Members of the Committee as soon as practicable.

94. **Members & Officer Indemnities:**

Consideration was given to the [report of the Monitoring Officer](#) (previously circulated).

Arising from the report the Monitoring Officer advised the Committee of the difficulties faced by Sheffield City Council in extending current insurance arrangements to cover liabilities in accordance with the Regulations and that either self insurance or some joint arrangements through the Local Government Association might need to be considered. He also advised that the exclusion of cover for criminal actions contained in the Regulations might have implications due to proposed changes in the law relating to corporate manslaughter.

The Parish Representative informed the Committee that he had asked for the Regulations to be considered at the next meeting of the Executive Committee of the Wiltshire Association of the Local Councils but asked the Committee to consider what other means actions be taken to assist parish councils implement the new Regulations.

Agreed –

- (1) that the Officers:
 - (a) approach the Council's insurers to see if they would be willing to extend current insurance arrangements to cover both Members and Officers for liability in accordance with the Regulations, if so, on what terms;
 - (b) make a general, in principle, approach to the Local Government Association to see if it would be willing to arrange separate insurance cover for Members or Officers of both Principal and Parish Councils; and
 - (c) report back to a future meeting on these matters;
- (2) that the Officers develop draft procedures for dealing with requests for indemnities for consideration by the Committee; and
- (3) that no recommendations be made to the Cabinet regarding the existing Council policy at this time.

95. **Matters of Urgency:**

Although the following matters did not appear on the agenda for the meeting the Chairman decided to take them as matters of urgency.

- (1) **Determination of Complaint Referred by the Standards Board** – It was noted that the Monitoring Officer would be circulating guidance on the determination of complaints prior to the consideration of a complaint at the next meeting.
- (2) **Freedom of Information Act** - In response to a question the Monitoring Officer reported on the number of requests for information received under the Freedom of Information Act and that many of these related to Development Services. Members considered that it would be important to include the implications of the Act within the revised Planning Code of Conduct.

The meeting concluded at 2.55 pm