



STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a MEETING held at COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE on MONDAY 20TH AUGUST 2001.

PRESENT: Mr PCB Coleman, Mr P McGuigan, Mrs P Rugg, Mr G Thompson, Mr RL Tickell.

Also present: Mr A Gooch (Deputy Independent Member) and Mr PWL Sample also attended the meeting.

1. Membership

The Monitoring Officer reported that, at its meeting on 29th June 2001, the County Council agreed to constitute a Standards Committee of 5 people, 2 County Councillors and 3 independent persons as follows:

County Council Members (2)

Mr PCB Coleman
Mrs P Rugg

Independent Members (3+1)

Mr P McGuigan
Mr G Thompson
Mr RL Tickell
Mr A Gooch (Deputy)

2. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

It was decided that a Chairman and Vice-Chairman should be elected at the next meeting and that this meeting should be used as a forum to enable members to become acquainted and to clarify the Committee's role.

3. Standards Committee

The Committee considered a report by the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer. It was noted that the Standards Committee Regulations had now been received and that there were some significant differences between the draft and final regulations. The main changes were outlined in a report prepared by the Monitoring Officer and tabled at the meeting.

Members raised various questions regarding the new role of the Committee that was now emerging. The following issues were discussed:

- Approval of the Council's statement of accounts, income and expenditure and balance sheet
- Review and monitoring of the Constitution

- The need for a policy regarding the granting of dispensations
- Members' code of conduct
- Training Requirements for Standards Committee members
- The whistle blowing policy
- Role of the Monitoring Officer
- Call-In of decisions
- The role of the Committee in relation to the Council's Complaints Procedure and Ombudsman investigations

Members felt that the Committee's role would evolve over time and acknowledged that it now appeared to have far wider areas of responsibility than was first envisaged.

4. Items for Future Consideration

Members discussed the key issues they felt should be considered at future meetings and agreed as follows:

- (i) The Committee should consider the following issues:
 - (a) Whether there is a need for an increase in its membership and whether the workload should be divided in some way.
 - (b) Its workload, frequency of meetings and the level of commitment now required in the light of the new regulations.
 - (c) Whether its meetings should be conducted in private or public session taking into account that the new regulations contain significant exceptions to the Access to Information provisions contained in the Local Government Act 1972.
- (ii) Officers be requested to:
 - (a) Produce a suggested work programme and timetable for the Committee.
 - (b) Prepare a report giving guidance on how best to monitor and review the Constitution including main priorities.
 - (c) Investigate the options available should the Committee wish to pay allowances to its independent members.
 - (d) Prepare a report on the Committee's responsibility for audit and statement of accounts.

5. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday 29th August 2001 at 5pm.

(Duration of meeting: 5.00pm – 6.55pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Marie Todd, of Democratic and Members' Services, direct line (01225) 713011.

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