

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 JANUARY 2011 AT COMMITTEE ROOM III, COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE.

Present:

Wiltshire Council Members

Cllr Nigel Carter, Cllr Ernie Clark, Cllr Peter Fuller, Cllr Malcolm Hewson, Cllr Julian Johnson and Cllr Ian McLennan

Town/Parish Council Co-opted Members

Mr William Bailey, Mr Craig McCallum, Mr Paul Neale, Mr Robert Oglesby JP, Mr John Scragg, Miss Pam Turner, Mr Keith Wallace and His Hon David MacLaren Webster QC

Independent co-opted Members

Mr Philip Gill MBE JP, Mrs Isabel McCord (Chairman), Mr Stuart Middleton and Mr Gerry Robson OBE (Vice Chairman)

Also Present:

Cllr Francis Morland

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs Jane Bayley and Mr Michael Cronin

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2010 were presented.

Resolved:

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes.

3. **Chairman's announcements**

There were no announcements

4. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

5. **Public participation**

No members of the public wished to speak

6. **Minutes of Sub Committees**

The minutes of the Dispensation sub-committee held on 16 November 2010 were presented.

Resolved:

To note the minutes

7. **Localism Bill - Proposed Changes to the Standards Regime**

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report which outlined the main changes to the standards regime.

He explained the impact of the proposed regime, especially how it affected town and parish councils, and drew attention to an e-mail which had been received from Tisbury Parish Council.

It was suggested in the report that the Constitution Focus Group be asked to look at the Bill and come up with some suggestions on the way forward for Wiltshire Council should the proposals be adopted, Members of the Standards Committee would be welcome to attend the Focus Group meetings.

It was also agreed that a workshop should be arranged for all Committee members and that issues and comments arising from the workshop be forwarded to the Focus Group to assist their deliberations.

It was requested that, prior to the workshop, all assessments carried out by Wiltshire Council were broken down into categories to assist the members to identify key issues.

The composition of the committee was discussed in detail and it was agreed that the proposals of a committee of 15 members were acceptable but that this should be achieved by natural wastage.

Resolved

1. **To request the Constitution Focus Group to look at the Localism Bill and develop a way forward for Wiltshire Council should the Bill be adopted.**
2. **To arrange a workshop for all members of the committee.**
3. **That the reduction in membership of the committee to 15 members be achieved through natural wastage.**

8. **Annual Audit Letter 2009/10**

The committee considered the Annual Audit Letter and noted that the governance arrangements were sound and that the council had continued to review, improve and consolidate its processes.

Resolved:

That the report be noted

9. **Report of the Task and Finish Group on Presentation to Area Boards**

Mr Gerry Robson OBE explained that the group had not met for some time and that the prime objective had been to keep Area Boards informed about the Standards regime by way of a presentation. In the light of the Localism Bill it was agreed that a presentation was no longer appropriate and it was therefore proposed to wind up the group and that the Standards Committee would keep town and parish council's informed of future developments.

Resolved:

To wind up the Task and Finish Group on Presentations to Area Boards.

10. **Status Report on Complaints made under the Code of Conduct**

The Monitoring Officer presented the report and explained that on average one third of cases go from assessment to investigation.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

11. **Feedback on the use of detailing findings of fact in investigation reports**

The Monitoring Officer introduced the item and explained that following experiences from previous Hearing Sub-Committees it had been decided that it would be helpful if the officer's report clearly detailed the findings of fact. This would enable Sub-Committee members to have the facts before them when it came to a hearing which could then be used as the basis for reaching a decision. This had already been trialled at a recent Consideration Sub-Committee and had proved to be useful.

12. **Review of Allowance for Standards Committee Members**

The Chairman introduced the report which outlined the action co-opted members could take if they wish to freeze their allowances at the current level.

Resolved:

That the report be noted

13. **Forward Plan**

The committee's forward workplan was presented.

Resolved

To note the forward workplan.

14. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items

(Duration of meeting: 2.00pm - 3.30 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Pam Denton, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718371, e-mail pam.denton@wiltshire.gov.uk

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