

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 14TH JUNE, 2007, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillor C. R. Scurrall and Councillor S. P. Shannon and Mr. S. E. Allard, Mr. N. A. Burke and Mrs. N. E. Trigg

Observer: Councillor S. R. Peters

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mrs. C. Felton, Mrs. D. Warren, A. Jessop and Ms. D. Parker-Jones

1/07 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED: that Mrs. N. E. Trigg and Councillor C. R. Scurrall be appointed Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee respectively for the municipal year.

2/07 **APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor E. C. Tibby.

3/07 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 5th April 2007 were submitted.

RESOLVED: that the Minutes be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4/07 **OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINT STATISTICS**

A report setting out provisional information from annual statistics compiled by the office of the Local Government Ombudsman on complaints recorded against the Council during the twelve month period ending 31st March 2007, was submitted. Members raised a number of issues in this regard, and it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that, if other local authorities statistics are available, officers be requested to compare and contrast these against our figures, and submit a report to the next meeting;
- (b) that, with regard to the six "Other" complaints referred to in the Appendix to the Report, officers be requested to investigate whether they were related to one issue, or a number of separate issues, and report their findings back to the next meeting; and
- (c) that, in all other respects, the Report be noted.

5/07 **NEW CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS**

A report outlining the new Code of Conduct for Councillors and co-opted members of the Council, together with accompanying guidance notes, was submitted. Members were advised that local authorities were required to adopt the Model Code of Conduct, drafted by the Department for Constitutional Affairs, by October 2007, and that this Model Code, whilst mandatory, could be amended with any local additions.

It was reported that officers had attended a number of training courses on the new Code of Conduct and, consequently, Members were now asked to consider a number of suggested possible local amendments to the Model Code. Whereupon it was

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that, subject to the amendments set out in (b) below, the Model Code of Conduct be recommended to the Council for adoption; and

- (b) that the following local amendments be made to the Code, i.e.,
 - (i) (in order to ensure that officers were not compromised or were not seen to be compromised), the addition of an extra clause to form Paragraph 3(e), as follows:

“No Member shall provide, or offer to provide, a reference for any candidate for employment or promotion with the Authority”
 - (ii) (to cut out the possibility of a loophole), re-draft Paragraph 6 to read as follows:

“(b) must not, when using or authorising the use of resources of, or under the control of, the Authority”
 - (iii) (the drafting of the Model requires Members to have regard only to the advice of the Section 151 Officer or the Monitoring Officer, but does not require Members to have regard to the advice of other professional officers such as Planning Officers) therefore re-draft Paragraph 7 to read as follows:

“When reaching decisions on any matter you must have regard to any relevant advice provided by your Authority’s officers, and in particular by (i) your Authority’s Chief Finance Officer; (ii) your Authority’s Monitoring Officer; or (iii) the Chief Legal Officer”; and
 - (iv) (to ensure openness and transparency at all times, and to gain the confidence of the public in the robustness of decision-making) to consider applying the need to declare personal and prejudicial interests at all meetings, including informal meetings, by revising the wording of Paragraph 1(4) of Paragraphs 9 to 12 by inserting the following additional clause:

“(d) Any other meeting at which you are conducting the business of your Authority or are acting, claiming to act, or giving the impression that you are acting as a representative of your Authority”

6/07 **WEST MERCIA INDEPENDENT MEMBERS' FORUM - MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the West Mercia Independent Members' Forum held on 26th January 2007 were submitted and noted.

The meeting closed at 6.35 p.m.

Chairman