

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY, 7TH FEBRUARY 2008 AT 6.00 PM**

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs. N. E. Trigg (Chairman - Independent Member), Councillors C. R. Scurrall (Vice-Chairman), S. P. Shannon and E. C. Tibby, Mr. S. E. Allard (Independent Member), Mr. N. A. Burke (Independent Member) and Mr. J. Cypher (Parish Councils' Representative)

Officers: Mr. T. Beirne, Mrs. C. Felton, Mrs. D. Warren and Ms. D. Parker-Jones.

29/07 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

30/07 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

31/07 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 23rd November 2007 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

32/07 **WEST MERCIA INDEPENDENT MEMBERS' FORUM**

The minutes of the meeting of the West Midlands Independent Members' Forum held on 11th July 2007 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be noted.

33/07 **MONITORING OFFICER'S UPDATE REPORT**

The following updates were provided:

**Current Member Investigations**

Members were advised that there was currently one Member investigation underway and that the Investigating Officer was on target to complete the report for this by the end of February. It was anticipated that the matter would be considered by the Committee towards the end of March/early April.

### Member Training

The Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) advised that officers had, the previous week, conducted a workshop style training session on the new Code of Conduct for those Members who had not previously attended training on this. The format of the session had proved to be very successful and had been more conducive to Member participation than the larger sessions run by external solicitors. Officers added that they had also provided training on the Code to some of the Parish Councils.

It was noted that seven Councillors had not attended training on the new Code. Officers advised that they would be happy to run a further training session on this, which would take place nearer the end of the current Municipal Year. The Committee requested that those Members who had not undertaken training on this be contacted and advised that it was the Committee's expectation that they should complete such training by the end of the current Municipal Year.

The DMO added that whilst the new Code of Conduct reduced the circumstances in which a Member would have a prejudicial interest, there were instances in which common law issues would come into play meaning it would be inadvisable for Members to participate in certain matters. It was felt that similar workshop style training sessions on bias and predetermination would therefore be useful. Chairmanship training for the Council's Independent Members was also being looked into, together with training on Register of Interests forms and the requirements for local assessment under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

### First Annual Report of the Standards Committee

It was anticipated that a further draft of the Annual Report would be referred to the next meeting of the Committee, with a final draft to be considered at the June meeting. The personal profiles of the members of the Committee were to be added to the Report and any further suggestions for inclusions could be referred to officers.

### Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 - Local Assessment of Complaints against Councillors - Consultation Responses

Further to the Committee's previous consideration of how local assessment might be carried out and the Council's current review of the Constitution, one response had been received from Members to the consultation on this which had suggested that any final determinations should be heard by the entire of the Standards Committee and not a separate sub-committee thereof. The DMO advised that a further report on local assessment would be referred to the Committee once the regulations for the revised ethical regime were available. Owing to the delay with the regulations the Council would not be making a decision on any required changes to the Constitution at its meeting in March and would instead consider this a later meeting. It was noted that a Consultation Paper from the Department for Communities and Local Government on Orders and Regulations Relating to the Conduct of Local

Authority Members in England appeared later in the agenda for the Committee's consideration.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the updates provided be noted; and
- (b) that those Members who had not yet completed training on the new Code of Conduct be advised that it was the Standards Committee's expectation that they do so by the end of the current Municipal Year.

34/07 **PARISH COUNCILS' REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE REPORT**

Mr. J. Cypher, the Parish Councils' Representative on the Standards Committee, provided the Committee with an update on the latest meeting of the Bromsgrove Area Committee of the Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils (CALC).

The DMO advised that she would be attending the next Area meeting in March to alert them to the changes due to be brought about by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, and to discuss the issue of additional Parish Council Representatives on the Standards Committee.

**RESOLVED** that the updates provided be noted.

35/07 **RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION PAPER - ORDERS AND REGULATIONS RELATING TO THE CONDUCT OF LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS IN ENGLAND**

The Committee considered a consultation paper from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on Orders and Regulations Relating to the Conduct of Local Authority Members in England. In view of the short consultation period and the closing date for responses (15th February 2008), it was noted that the Monitoring Officer would also be seeking views on the Consultation Paper from all Members and would compile an appropriate response on behalf of the Council.

Members made a number of comments on the Questions raised in the Consultation Paper, which officers agreed to incorporate in the final response to the DCLG.

**RESOLVED** that the comments raised by the Committee on the Questions contained within the Consultation Paper be included in the Monitoring Officer's response to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

36/07 **WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to a proposed Work Programme for the Committee.

Members welcomed the introduction of a Work Programme, which it was noted would appear as a regular item on future Committee agendas, save for those meetings which were dedicated to Member investigations.

**RESOLVED** that the Work Programme be approved.

37/07 **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS - 2008/09**

A report advising of the meeting dates of the Standards Committee for the 2008/09 Municipal Year was submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the Calendar of Meetings for the Standards Committee be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.58 pm

Chairman