

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Standards Committee on Wednesday, 24 February 2010 in Committee Room 1, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Mr B. Badrock (Chairman), Parish Councillor Crawford, Mr R. Garner, Mr T. Luxton and Councillors Balmer, Parker, Redhead, Wainwright and Wharton

Apologies for Absence: Parish Councillor D. Felix

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney and A. Scott

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE

STC19 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2009, having been printed and circulated, were signed as a correct record.

STC20 STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND ROUND UP

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which brought Members up to date on the latest news from Standards for England.

Since the last Committee meeting Standards for England had released Bulletin 46 which was appended to the report for information. Of particular note was the lack of reference to the proposed revised Code of Conduct for Members which had been anticipated in Autumn 2009.

The Bulletin also gave an update on the following items:

- dealing with pre-determination and bias;
- the local assessment process and how this

Action

would feed into the review of the Local Standards Framework;

- the availability of the third edition of the Government's toolkit for Parish and Town Councils; and
- the transfer of the Adjudication Panel for England into the unified tribunal structure.

Members discussed the relationship between bias, predetermination and the Code of Conduct. They also discussed the inclusion of Parish Councillors on any future training events undertaken by the Borough Council. In addition, they noted the feedback on the review of the local standards framework.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) a representative from Standards for England be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to increase understanding of the Code of Practice; and
- 3) all Members and Parish Councillors be invited to attend training when the new Code of Conduct is issued.

Operational
Director (Legal
and Democratic
Services)

STC21 RECENT CASE SUMMARIES FROM STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy on case summaries recently published on the Standards for England website.

The Committee noted that three of the case summaries related to Blackpool Council. The ethical standards officer had found in all three cases that the individual Members did not breach the Code of Conduct.

In the fourth case, at West Felton Parish Council, the ethical standards officer had decided to refer the matter to Shropshire Council's Standards Committee for determination.

Members discussed the case studies and how the underlying principles in the Code could be applied to elected Member involvement on such regulatory committees as

Development Control and Licensing. Of particular note were the contents of paragraphs 3, 5, 9 and 12 of the Code and how their relevance had been considered in the case summaries.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

STC22 ON LINE GUIDE

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which advised them of the recent issue of on-line guides on the Standards for England web site.

The guides, which were summarised in the attached appendix, had been published since the last meeting of the Committee. The first dealt with the recruitment process for the appointment of Independent Members. The Committee noted that the term of office for two Independent Members of the Committee would end in the current municipal year, and an advert in the local press would invite applications for the two places. In addition, it was also announced that Parish Councillor Ronald Crawford was to retire from the Committee as he had decided to stand down as a Parish Councillor.

The second guide dealt with Freemasons and their relationship to the Code of Conduct. The Committee noted that Freemasons were not singled out by the Code, but that the Code applied to memberships of any body directed at charitable purposes.

The third guide dealt with notifications given to Parish and Town Councils when a complaint regarding one of their Members had been assessed. The guide included advice about what information they should receive, when notifications should be sent and what arrangements the Parish or Town Council should have in place to ensure that the rights of all concerned in a complaint would be considered.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

STC23 DRAFT ACTION LIST

The Committee's Action List was attached for consideration and amendment if necessary.

RESOLVED: That the list be agreed.

STC24 RETIRING MEMBERS

The Chairman wished to place on record his thanks on behalf of the Committee on the occasion of the retirement of Parish Councillor Ronald Crawford, for his service on the Standards Committee. He also thanked Mr Tony Luxton, whose term of office was due to end in the current municipal year, for his service on the Committee.

Mr Reaney, Operational Director, also wished to place on record his thanks to the retiring Chairman, Mr Bill Badrock whose term of office was also due to end, for his dedication and service to the Standards Committee. In addition Mr Reaney thanked Mr Luxton for his service and also thanked Parish Councillor Crawford and wished him well in his retirement.

Meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.