

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Monday, 28th July, 2003, at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT:-

The Bishop of Dudley (Independent Chair)
Councillors Bramall, Fraser-Macnamara, Hanson, Ms Partridge, Powell and Tyler and Mrs F Jabeen (Independent Member), together with the Director of Law and Property and Mr J Jablonski (Directorate of Law and Property).

1 **CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE**

The Committee noted that at the Annual Council Meeting, the Bishop of Dudley had been appointed as their independent Chair.

2 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th June, 2002, be approved as a correct record and signed.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

4 **CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICY**

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on the operation of the Council's Confidential Reporting Policy and on a proposal to consider minor modifications to the Policy.

Arising from the consideration of the content of the report submitted, a number of suggestions were made as to how members could be further informed about the content and operation of the Policy.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted, on the outcome of the recent monitoring of the Confidential Reporting Policy, be noted and that the Executive be recommended to agree to the updating of the Policy to reflect the recent restructuring of Directorates.
- (2) That, following the updating of the Policy, a copy be sent to all members of the Council together with a covering letter indicating, in particular, the action a Member should take if a matter under the policy was referred to him.
- (3) That the Director of Law and Property be requested to arrange for consideration to be given to the content of the Council's Confidential Reporting Policy at future sessions of the New Members' Induction.

5

DETERMINATION OF COMPLAINTS BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on Regulations made under Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2000, with regard to the determination of complaints investigated under the Members' Code of Conduct.

Key features of the new regulations were set out in Section 2.4 of the report submitted and in respect of these the Monitoring Officer reported that in further guidance received from the Standards Board, the opinion given in that guidance regarding whether meetings of the Standards Committee should be held in private session when it determined complaints was that unless there were sound reasons for doing so proceedings should be in public. Further consideration however needed to be given to this aspect and other key features outlined in the report, for example, the attendance of an Ethical Standards Officer at meetings of the Standards Committee; the range of sanctions that could be applied and the proposals relating to the composition of the Committee when it considered complaints, for example, whether the whole Committee or a Sub-Committee should be used. These and other issues would be the subject of a further report to a future meeting of this Committee to be held in either September or October, 2003 to consider and determine a procedure to apply to any complaints that were referred to the Committee by the Ethical Standards Officer of the Standards Board.

Consideration was also given to the content of a video from the Standards Board entitled "The Code in Practice" which was viewed on the basis of its possible use as part of member training.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted, regarding Regulations made under Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2000, with regard to the determination of complaints investigated under the Members' Code of Conduct, be noted and that a further report be submitted by the Monitoring Officer to a meeting of this Committee to be held in September/October, 2003, regarding guidance from the Standards Board on procedures to be applied to any complaints referred by an Ethical Standards Officer for consideration by the Standards Committee.
- (2) That the Monitoring Officer be requested to speak to the three Group Leaders regarding the possible use of the video received from the Standards Board entitled "The Code in Practice" as part of the training to be provided for members with the proviso that the position with regard to planning issues be clarified due to the existence of the Council's local Code of Practice for Members and Officers dealing with planning matters.

The meeting ended at 7.20 p.m.

CHAIR