

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 20th January, 2010 at 5.00 p.m.
in the Directorate of the Urban Environment Conference Room,
3 St. James's Road, Dudley

PRESENT

The Bishop of Dudley (Independent Chairman)
Councillors Ms. Boleyn, Kettle, Mrs. P. Martin and Ms. Partridge;
Father A. Williams – Independent Member.

Officers

The Director of Corporate Resources (Monitoring Officer), the Interim Assistant Director (Legal and Democratic Services) and the Democratic Services Manager.

22 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J. R. Davies and Tyler and Mrs. V. Ainsworth.

23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No member made a declaration of interest, in accordance with Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

24 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That, subject to a minor amendment in Minute No. 16, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14th October, 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed.

25 **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on the arrangements for the making of a recommendation to the Council on the appointment of an Independent Member to serve on the Standards Committee.

The term of office of the Bishop of Dudley would expire on 26th April, 2010. The Committee noted that the Standards Board for England had issued guidance that the appointment of independent members should be on the basis of a term of four years with a maximum of two terms, however, this was at the discretion of each authority. The guidance also stated that independent members could not be automatically re-appointed without a recruitment process being undertaken.

The Committee was recommended to authorise the Monitoring Officer to make all the necessary arrangements, including the convening of an interviewing panel, so that an appropriate recommendation could be made to the Council on 26th April, 2010.

The Bishop of Dudley left the meeting during the Committee's discussion on this item.

RESOLVED

That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make all the necessary arrangements regarding the appointment of an Independent Member of the Council's Standards Committee with a view to the making of a recommendation to the Council on such an appointment for a four year period commencing on 27th April, 2010.

QUESTION UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11.8

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.8, Councillor Ms. Partridge had given notice of the following question to the Chairman.

"What useful purpose does the Standards Committee serve in considering Councillors' allowances?"

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.9, the Chairman responded as follows:-

"Under the requirements of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, the Council has a duty to consider the recommendations of an Independent Remuneration Panel when making or amending its Members Allowances Scheme. There is no legal reason why the Independent Panel's report and recommendations should not go straight to full Council.

In Dudley, however, a local choice has been made to refer the Independent Panel's report to the Standards Committee to add greater transparency and openness to the process. The role of a Standards Committee in considering allowances is not a statutory one, however, it demonstrates good practice by involving the Standards Committee and its independent members in the debate.

The Council's democratic governance arrangements are enhanced by enabling the Standards Committee the opportunity to comment and make any comments or recommendations to the Council.

Both the Independent Remuneration Panel and the Standards Committee have a useful role, statutory or otherwise, in making observations, expressing ideas and making recommendations. However, ultimately, the decision on the adoption of the allowances scheme rests with the members of the Council, who are entitled to take a different view to those expressed by the Standards Committee.

To remove the Standards Committee from considering the allowances scheme would detract from the excellent democratic governance arrangements adopted by Dudley MBC thus diminishing inclusiveness, accountability, openness and transparency.”

The meeting ended at 5.25 p.m.

CHAIRMAN