

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2008 at 6.00 pm  
in Committee Room 4 at the Council House, Dudley

### **PRESENT:-**

The Bishop of Dudley (Independent Chairman)  
Councillors J R Davies, Kettle, Ms Partridge and Tyler; Miss L Smith

### **OFFICERS**

The Director of Law and Property, Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services and Mr J Jablonski and Mrs M Johal (Directorate of Law and Property).

### 23 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ms Craigie and Mrs Martin and Mr Beards

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### 24 **MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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### 25 **MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

It was reported that, in connection with the appointment of a third Independent Member to serve on the Committee (Minute 22), the Council, at its meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2008, had agreed to the recommendation that Mr John Beards be appointed as the third Independent Member of this Committee for a term of four years with effect from 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2008.

It was noted that Mr Beards was unable to attend this meeting of the Committee.

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### 26 **LOCAL INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS**

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on proposed arrangements for the Local Initial Assessment of Complaints under the Members' Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer in his presentation of the report, reported that the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008, referred to in paragraph 2 of the report submitted, had now been made and would come into force on 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2008. However, guidance on the local assessment of complaints had yet to be received from the Standards Board for England. Because of this, details for the training of Members of the Standards Committee could not yet be finalised and this was also the case in respect of the handling of complaints from May, 2008.

Consideration was then given to the implications of the new arrangements, which would give rise to the need to appoint three differently constituted Sub-Committees to deal with each stage of the process, that is:-

- local initial assessment;
- review of decision not to investigate; and
- hearing following report by the investigating officer

In view of the nature of the roles to be performed, it was suggested that the first Sub-Committee be known as the Referrals Sub-Committee; the second Sub-Committee as the Review Sub-Committee and the third Sub-Committee be the Hearings Sub-Committee. As required by the Regulations, each Sub-Committee would be chaired by one of the Committee's Independent Members.

As the Committee had experience of the hearing of a complaint, it was considered that the training, once guidance had been received, would focus mainly on the work of the Referrals and Review Sub-Committees given the new nature of these roles.

Regarding the roles of these two Sub-Committees, the Monitoring Officer referred to a recent seminar that he had attended with the Chairman of this Committee, which had comprised training using actual cases considered by the Standards Board with the emphasis on the criteria the Standards Board had applied. It was noted that the threshold for agreeing to carry out an investigation had been raised.

It was further noted that when the guidance from the Standards Board for England had been received it would be forwarded to all Members of the Committee and that arrangements would be made for training sessions to be held in May, 2008. Further consideration would also be given to arrangements for meetings of Sub-Committees, including the scheduling of dates for meetings of the Referrals Sub-Committee, and, if appropriate, the use of reciprocal arrangements with other Authorities.

#### RESOLVED

1. That the information contained in the report submitted, and as reported at the meeting, on arrangements for the Local Initial Assessment of Complaints under the Members' Code of Conduct, be noted.

2. That three Sub-Committees be appointed for 2008/09, to be chaired by an Independent Member, as follows:-

**Referrals Sub-Committee**

Ms L Smith  
(Chairman)

Councillor J Davies  
Councillor Kettle

**Review Sub-Committee**

Mr J Beards  
(Chairman)

Councillor Ms  
Craigie  
Councillor Ms  
Partridge

**Hearings Sub-Committee**

The Bishop of  
Dudley (Chairman)

Councillor Mrs  
Martin  
Councillor Tyler

and that the membership of the Sub-Committees be subject to the subsequent nomination and appointment of Members to Committees at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May, 2008.

3. That training for Members of the Standards Committee be arranged for May, 2008.

The meeting ended at 6.50 pm

CHAIRMAN