

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 30th June, 2009 at 6.00 p.m.
in Committee Room 4 at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT

The Bishop of Dudley (Independent Chairman)
Councillors J.R. Davies, Mrs. Greenaway, Kettle and Ms. Partridge; Mrs.
V. Ainsworth

Officers

The Interim Director of Law and Property, Interim Assistant Director ICT
and Business Transformation and Mr. J. Jablonski (Directorate of Law,
Property and Human Resources).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of
Councillors Ms. Boleyn, Mrs. Martin and Tyler

2 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBER

It was reported that Councillor Mrs. Greenaway had been appointed as a
substitute member for Councillor Mrs. Martin for this meeting of the
Committee only.

3 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.

4 WELCOME TO MRS. AINSWORTH

The Chairman welcomed Mrs. Ainsworth, a recently appointed
Independent Member to the Committee, to this, her first meeting and,
following brief comments about herself, introductions were made by all
the other persons present.

5 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30th April, 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed.

6

APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEES FOR 2009/10

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on the re-appointment of the Committee's three Sub-Committees for the 2009/10 municipal year, so as to continue the arrangements for the local initial assessment and hearing of complaints under the Members' Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED

That the Referrals Sub-Committee, Review Sub-Committee and Hearings Sub-Committee be re-appointed for 2009/10 Municipal Year with the following memberships and with their existing terms of reference:-

Referrals Sub-Committee	Review Sub-Committee	Hearings Sub-Committee
Mrs. V. Ainsworth (Chairman)	Father Alan Williams (Chairman) (subject to confirmation of appoint- ment at Council on 13 th July, 2009)	The Bishop of Dudley (Chairman)
Councillors JR Davies		Councillors Mrs. Martin
Kettle	Councillors Ms. Boleyn Ms. Partridge	Tyler

7

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A report of the Interim Director of Law and Property was submitted on a recommendation to Council regarding the appointment of a third Independent Member to serve on the Standards Committee, arising from the holding of an Interview Panel that had met on Thursday, 18th June, 2009, to interview a Father Alan Williams.

RESOLVED

That the decision of the Interview Panel to unanimously recommend that Father Alan Williams be recommended to Council as the third Independent Member of the Council's Standards Committee for the four year period commencing on 14th July, 2009, be endorsed.

WORK PROGRAMME, 2009/10

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on a proposed work programme for the Committee for 2009/10.

During his presentation of the report, the Interim Director of Law and Property indicated that, as appropriate, other items could be added to the work programme.

RESOLVED

That the work programme of the Committee for 2009/10, as set out below, be approved:-

Date of Meeting	Items of Business
30 th June, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members' Blackberry provision • Legal update
14 th October, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Confidential Reporting Policy • Annual Report - Members' Code of Conduct • Update of the Code of Conduct for employees
11 th January, 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life • Summary of Decisions by the Adjudication Panel for England
29 th April, 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of procedures for Local Determination of complaints • Update on Revised Code of Corporate Governance and the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

MEMBERS' BLACKBERRY PROVISION

A report of the Interim Director of Finance was submitted on the consideration given by the Members' ICT Working Group, at a meeting held on the 10th June, 2009, to the provision of a suitable mobile communication device (Blackberry type) to all Members who requested one, as requested by this Committee at its meeting held on the 30th April, 2009, arising from the consideration of this particular point as part of consideration given to the Members' Allowances Scheme.

The Interim Assistant Director ICT and Business Transformation commented on the content of the report submitted. In so doing he made particular reference to the decision of that Working Group that there was insufficient reason to change the existing policy, as agreed by that Working Group at a meeting held on the 11th March, 2008, which was that, if requested, Blackberry devices would be made available to those Members who did not take a broadband service from the Council as the costs were comparable as indicated in Appendix 1 to the report submitted.

Arising from initial comments made by the Interim Assistant Director and Members present, it was reported that whilst currently only seven members had been equipped with a Blackberry under the existing policy, it was considered that this number could increase, especially as more Members obtained their own personal computer. Given this, it was considered that there was a need to review the technology that was available to members and its provision, especially in the light of perceived benefits to the Council and members involved.

Arising from requests made for further information and training sessions for members on IT, the Interim Assistant Director reported that he would arrange for a paper that had previously been prepared to be circulated to members and referred to the technology showcase that was usually held before the October Council meeting. A request was made that the briefing paper be set out in layman's terms. It was also indicated that, if required, dedicated training sessions for members could be held on IT provision, as indicated at the meeting.

Given the suggestions made, it was considered that the issue of the provision of Blackberrys be kept under review, given that the comments made could lead to a further highlighting of the technology available and possible increase in demand, and that accordingly no recommendation be made at this time to Council on the provision of Blackberry type devices for members.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and as reported at the meeting, on the review undertaken of the Council policy regarding the provision of Blackberry type devices for members, be noted and that the Interim Assistant Director ICT and Business Transformation be requested to arrange for a briefing note on the provision available and the further training for members indicated including that to be given at the showcase event, before the October meeting of Council and that, in view of the further work to be undertaken, the issue of the provision of Blackberry type devices to members be kept under review and accordingly no recommendation be made to Council at this time on this matter.

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STANDARDS BOARD INTERVENTION, JOINT STANDARDS COMMITTEES AND DISPENSATIONS

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on the receipt of new Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Regulations, 2009 (SI 2009/1255) which came into force from 15th June, 2009. The regulations make provision for the Standards Board for England to suspend the functions of a local Standards Committee; give authorities a power to establish Joint Standards Committees and extend the power of Standards Committees to give Members' dispensations where they would otherwise be prohibited from participating on a matter because of a prejudicial interest.

The Monitoring Officer commented on the content of the report relating to these three particular matters.

In respect of these matters, members gave particular consideration to the issues of the establishment of Joint Standards Committees and the granting of dispensations.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on provisions contained within the Standards Committee (Further Provision) (England) Regulations, 2009 (SI 2009/1255) which came into force from 15th June, 2009, be noted and that in respect of the provisions referred to in those regulations:-

- (a) Information contained in the report submitted on the suspension of Standards Committee functions, as indicated in paragraphs 2 to 6 of the report submitted, be noted.

- (b) Regarding the power to establish Joint Standards Committees, the Interim Director of Law and Property be requested to make enquiries from neighbouring authorities and approach the West Midlands Chief Legal Officer Group and the National Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors, so that the views obtained from those authorities and bodies might be reported on at a future meeting of this Committee; and
- (c) Regarding dispensations, the Interim Director of Law and Property be requested to circulate to Members of the Committee a copy of recently received guidance on this matter; give consideration to the training required for Members and to a mechanism for dealing with the granting of dispensations in cases of urgency.

The meeting ended at 6.55 p.m.

CHAIRMAN