

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2006, at 6.00pm  
in Committee Room 4 at the Council House, Dudley

### PRESENT:-

The Bishop of Dudley (Independent Chairman)  
Councillors Fraser-Macnamara, Hart, Ms Partridge, Tyler and J Woodall

### OFFICERS

The Director of Law and Property (as Monitoring Officer) and Mrs M Johal  
(Directorate of Law and Property)

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13            MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup>  
January, 2006, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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14            DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

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15            APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of  
Councillor Male and Mrs Jabeen.

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16            PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE FRAMEWORK GOVERNING  
STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

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A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on the Government's  
proposals for changing the framework governing standards of conduct in  
local government.

Following the presentation of the report, Members made reference to the  
proposal to replace the term "friend" with "close personal associate" or  
other suitable alternative expression and sought clarification on the  
meaning of the revised term. It was also requested that clarification be  
sought on the procedure that would be followed for determining whether  
employment was sensitive with a view to including details in a private  
register.

In responding, the Monitoring Officer undertook to include these issues in a response to the Government.

RESOLVED

That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to submit a response, on behalf of the Committee, to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister welcoming the proposals for changing the framework governing standards of conduct in local government but including comments of the interpretation of “close personal associate” and the procedure for including details of sensitive employment in a private register.

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17 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as set out in Schedule 12(A) of that Act, in particular, the paragraph of Part I of that Schedule indicated below:-

<u>Description of Item</u>	<u>Relevant Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12(A)</u>
Guide for Members on Internet Access, Use of E-Mail and Councillors' Websites	1

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18 GUIDE FOR MEMBERS ON INTERNET ACCESS, USE OF E-MAIL AND COUNCILLORS' WEBSITES

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on the proposed introduction of a Guide for Members on Internet Access, Use of E-Mail and Councillors' Websites. A copy of a draft guide was attached at Appendix 1 to the report submitted.

During the presentation of the report, the Monitoring Officer referred to paragraph 18 of the draft Guide and stated that the words “as defined in paragraph 6 above” would be inserted after the words “Council business”. It was also pointed out paragraph 28 should read “paragraph 6 above” and not “paragraph 5 above” as stated.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member referred to paragraph 2 of the draft Guide and commented it was Council policy that members may not use a personal computer to connect to the Council network. It was not possible for some Members to have two computers due to inconvenience and the lack of space. It was also requested that after “rebuke” in paragraph 23 the words “in an offensive and personal manner” should be inserted and that the following additional sentence should be included “However, e-mails may be used by members to register a complaint or express their disagreement”. Further comments included the insertion of a sentence in paragraph 24 to reflect that the Chairman of the Standards Committee may take advice from the Monitoring Officer.

The Monitoring Officer undertook to amend the draft Guide with a view to incorporating the comments and concerns raised and further undertook to provide an amended copy to Members of the Committee, prior to submission to the Leader of the Council.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That, subject to the inclusion of the comments and concerns raised, as indicated above, support be given to the introduction of a Guide for Members on Internet Access, use of E-Mail and Councillors’ Websites, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report submitted.
- (2) That, in view of the introduction of the Guide, no further action be taken in relation to the anonymous complaint referred to in paragraph 2 of the report submitted.

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The meeting ended at 7 pm

CHAIRMAN