

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Monday, 12th January, 2009, at 6.00 pm
in Committee Room 3 at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT

The Bishop of Dudley (Independent Chairman)
Councillors Ms. Boleyn, J. R. Davies, Mrs. P. Martin and Tyler;
Miss L. Smith (Independent Member)

OFFICERS

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

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Attwood and Ms Partridge.

24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

25 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15th October, 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed.

26 COMMENTS MADE BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman congratulated John Polychronakis on his appointment as Interim Chief Executive and Philip Tart on his appointment as Interim Director of Law and Property and Monitoring Officer.

Reference was also made to the appointment of Mohammed Farooq as Interim Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE WEBSITE

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on the existing content of the Council's website in relation to the work of the Committee and to the seeking of any views or comments on potential improvement or enhancements for the future.

A practical demonstration of the content of the website was given and members informed how to access the website via the Council's official website. In considering the website details were also highlighted of how complaints could be made against Councillors and co-opted members by the use of the forms indicated on the website. It was emphasised that prior to the use of any of the documentation shown a member of the public could contact the monitoring officer to discuss their particular concerns prior to the making of any complaint.

Following consideration of the website details were shown on the Committee Management Information System of the composition of the Committee and of meetings and reports submitted to the Committee.

Arising from this the Chairman asked that the thanks of the Committee be recorded for the work undertaken by Steve Griffiths, Democratic Services Manager, in respect of the Standards Committee website .

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, and as shown in the practical demonstration given, on the existing content of the Council's website in relation to the work of the Standards Committee, be noted and the content therein endorsed.

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A report of the Monitoring Officer was submitted on the consideration to be given to the appointment of a third Independent member to serve on the Standards Committee.

Arising from the consideration given to this matter, it was requested that in addition to the newspaper advertisement to be produced, arrangements also be made to circulate a copy of the advertisement to other interested bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce and Dudley Council for Voluntary Service.

Regarding the proposed timetable for the process, the arrangements set out in paragraph five of the report submitted were endorsed and it was agreed that the Chairman and Councillors Mrs Martin and Tyler form the Panel to undertake short listing and interviewing of persons for the appointment. The meetings involved would commence at 6 pm or, in the case of the interview date at such earlier time as was deemed more convenient.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to place an advertisement for a third Independent member of the Standards Committee as set out in the Appendix to the report submitted.
- (2) That the Chairman and Councillors Mrs Martin and Tyler comprise the Panel to undertake the short listing and interviewing process.
- (3) That the timescale for the appointment of the third Independent member, as set out in paragraph five of the report submitted, be approved.
- (4) That a recommendation on the appointment of the third Independent member be submitted to the Council at its meeting to be held on 23rd February, 2009.

A copy of The Case Review: 2008 Digest produced by the Standards Board for England was circulated at the meeting.

The Monitoring Officer then commented on the content of the digest referring to the various cases outlined in it.

Arising from the consideration given to this matter, and comments made by members on the cases, the Monitoring Officer was asked to consider the issue of whether disrespect shown to an organisation was a breach of the Code of Conduct and agreed to inform members on this issue in due course.

The Monitoring Officer was also asked to ensure that, when relevant training was arranged for members in the future, the position of members, in particular those serving on the Development Control Committee, when an issue was raised at a meeting which may be the subject of an application to the Development Control Committee, be further considered and clarified. He also indicated that he would arrange for a guidance note on this matter to be circulated to members of the Council.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in The Case Review: 2008 Digest, produced by the Standards Board for England, be noted and that the Monitoring Officer be requested to arrange for the necessary action to be taken in respect of the two matters indicated above.

The meeting ended at 7.10 pm

CHAIRMAN