

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

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

PRESENT

The Bishop of Dudley (Independent Chairman)
Councillors Attwood (for part of the meeting only), Ms. Boleyn, J. R.
Davies, Mrs. P. Martin, Ms Partridge, Tyler and Wright (for part of the
meeting only)

OFFICERS

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

30

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of
Councillor Attwood (for part of the meeting only) and Miss L Smith
(Independent Member).

31

APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBER

It was noted that Councillor Wright had been appointed as a substitute
member for Councillor Attwood for part of the meeting only.

32

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A declaration of personal interest was made on behalf of all elected
members present in accordance with Members' Code of Conduct in
respect of Agenda 6 – Members' Allowances Scheme – in view of the
content of the report.

The Bishop of Dudley declared a personal interest in accordance with
Members' Code of Conduct in that part of Agenda item 6 – Members'
Allowances Scheme – relating to consideration of payment to co-opted
members.

The Bishop of Dudley also declared a personal interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct in that part of Agenda item 6 – Members' Allowances Scheme – relating to consideration of payment to co-opted Members particularly those statutory co-optees to Scrutiny Committees dealing with education matters who serve on a voluntary basis in view of his involvement in such appointments.

33 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12th January, 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed.

34 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Interim Director of Law and Property referred to Minute 29 – The Case Review : 2008 Digest – The Standards Board for England - with particular reference to the comment made as to whether the issue of disrespect shown to an organisation was a breach of the Code of Conduct. In response he referred to the ten general principles of public life set out as a pre-amble to the Members' Code of Conduct with particular reference to the principle – respect for others – which referred only to any “person” and “people”. He also indicated that the issue of training referred to in the pre-amble to the Minute was in hand.

35 THE ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY

A report of the Interim Director of Law and Property was submitted on amendments to the Strategy that had originally been approved by the Council in 2004.

The Head of Audit Services in his presentation identified the revisions to the Strategy, a revised copy of which was attached as Appendix 1 to the report submitted.

The Head of Audit Services also referred to a forthcoming audit of the Ethics framework and to the training that would be given to Members following the completion of this which would also include consideration of the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy.

In response to a further question the Head of Audit Services reported that once the Strategy had been approved it would be publicised and drawn to the attention of those concerned, including Head Teachers and Governors, referred to in the Strategy.

RESOLVED

That approval be given to the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy as set out in Appendix 1 to the Report submitted.

36

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

A joint report of the Interim Director of Finance and the Interim Director of Law & Property was submitted arising from receipt of a report of the Independent Panel on Members' Allowances attached as Appendix 1 to the report submitted. Attachments to that report referred to the Council's current scheme for Members' Allowances, the special responsibility allowances paid and a comparison with a number of other authorities as to the Members' Allowances payable.

The recommendations of the Independent Panel on Members' Allowances were summarised at paragraph 6 of the joint report submitted.

Arising from the presentation given by the Interim Director of Law and Property on the content of the report, and the Appendix, Members considered that the overall budget for the payment of Members' Allowances, as set out in paragraph 7 of the joint report submitted, should not be exceeded given the current economic climate in the country and the implications of this on all concerned.

Arising from the detailed consideration given to the particular issues of the basic allowance, special responsibility allowance and the remaining recommendations, most of which were already contained in the Council's current Members' Allowances Scheme, it was:-

RESOLVED

1. That the Cabinet be recommended to recommend the Council that:-
 - a) the budgetary provision for Members' Allowances in 2009/10 be contained within the budget of £739,000, as indicated in paragraph 7 of the joint report submitted.
 - b) all Special Responsibility Allowances be held at their current, that is, 2006 level.
 - c) savings, from resolution b) above and by the removal from the current Members' Allowances Scheme of the provision whereby one half of the second (or next highest) allowance is paid in those instances where a Member holds more than one office qualifying for a Special Responsibility Allowance, be used to fund an increase in the Basic Allowance payable to all Members of the Council.

- d) That the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances paid in 2009/10 be varied with effect from 1st April, 2010 until 1st April, 2013, in line with agreed pay increases for Local Authority staff.
 - e) That the remaining bullet points in paragraph 6 of the joint report submitted, that is bullet points 5-12, be adopted, being provisions, with one exception, already within the Council's existing Members Allowances Scheme ;the additional provision being as follows -
 - Consideration is given to the provision of a suitable mobile communication device (Blackberry type) to all Members who request such.
2. That, arising from the detailed consideration given to the provision of a suitable mobile communication device (Blackberry type) and the information given at the meeting in relation to cost savings for the provision of such devices and the features available to Members, the Members ICT Working Group be requested to give further consideration to the provision of a suitable mobile communication device (Blackberry type) to all Members who request one, such device to be in addition to and not instead of a laptop given the comments expressed on the need for appropriate provision and support to be given to Members in their work again on the basis of them requesting such provision and that following such consideration the matter be reported back to a future meeting of the Standards Committee.

The meeting ended at 7.15 pm

CHAIRMAN