

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

29 March 2010

Attendance:

Mr P Smith (Independent Member - Chairman) (P)

Councillors:

Barratt (P)

Baxter (P)

Berry (P)

Chamberlain (P)

Izard (P)

Lipscomb (P)

Nelmes (P)

Independent Members and Parish Representatives in attendance

Mr J Barnett (Independent Member)

Ms J Collins (Independent Member)

Ms J Bond (Parish Representative)

Mr J Harris (Parish Representative)

Mr J Watson (Parish Representative)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Ms C Hicks (Independent Member) and Mr M Evans (Parish Representative).

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 30 November 2009 be approved and adopted.

3. **STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND – ANNUAL RETURN 2010**

(Report ST83 refers)

With regard to the questions in the above return which related to the publication of an annual report, the Corporate Director (Governance) explained that although the report produced by the Council at present did not include all the topics covered in the questions, the relevant information was publicly available from links on the Standards Committee page on the website. Whilst noting this, Members agreed that it would be useful for the Council to produce an annual report in the next municipal year and have all that information in one document. However, being mindful of the limited resources available, it was emphasised that the report should be a concise

publication. It was also agreed that the report should be referred to full Council.

As a general point, it was agreed that the draft responses on page 3 of the return be re-worded to clarify the Council's position.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Corporate Director (Governance) be requested to produce a Standards Annual Report for the City Council, in the format as now agreed.

2. That the Corporate Director (Governance) be authorised to finalise the Annual Return 2010 for submission to Standards for England, as set out in the above report, subject to a minor re-wording to improve the clarity of responses on page 3.

4. **MONITORING OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS BY INDEPENDENT MEMBERS AND PARISH REPRESENTATIVES - FEEDBACK**
(Report ST80 refers)

The Committee was pleased to note that those monitoring proceedings observed a high level of compliance regarding probity and ethics at meetings, with no issues of concern being raised. A number of useful comments had been made about more general issues, including signage, public participation and the length of Planning Development Control (PDC) Committee meetings.

With regard to the PDC Committee, there was a view that speakers during the public participation period should be allowed to finish their statements, even though it meant over-running the three minutes allowed. Other Members considered that, if the Chairman was permitted to exercise such a discretion, it could lead to accusations of inconsistency or bias. There was, however, more general agreement that the length of debates at the Committee could and should be reduced, mainly through avoiding repetition and being more concise. It was also agreed that Question 14 on the monitoring questionnaire could be widened to include how well the public participation period was being handled by the Chairman.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Independent Members and Parish Representatives be thanked for undertaking the monitoring of committee meetings to ascertain the levels of compliance with the Code of Conduct and other guidance.

2. That, in future, the monitoring exercise be undertaken every year instead of every other year.

3. That the Planning Development Control Committee be requested to consider the above comments concerning public speaking and Member debate.

4. That the content of this report and the additional comments above be drawn to the attention of all Group Leaders and Chairmen.

5. **STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND – BULLETINS 46 AND 47**
(Report ST81 refers)

It was agreed that the updated guidance on pre-determination and bias, contained in Bulletin 46, be included in the next Members Briefing Note.

It was also agreed that the Governance Toolkit for Parish and Town Councils, also in Bulletin 46, be drawn to the attention of parish clerks through the Council's Parish Connect e-letter.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the above, the content of Standards for England Bulletins 46 and 47 be noted.

6. **BLOGGING – QUICK GUIDE**
(Report ST782 refers)

It was agreed that the guide be included in the next Members Briefing Note. A weblink would also be added from the Council's IMT Security and Conduct Policy on the website.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the above, the content of the Standards for England Quick Guide to Blogging be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.15pm and concluded at 7.20pm

Chairman