

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**27 September 2010**

### **Attendance:**

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

### **Councillors:**

Banister (P)

Baxter (P)

Berry (P)

Clear (P)

Chamberlain (P)

Lipscomb (P)

### **Independent Members and Parish Representatives in attendance:**

Mr J Barnett (Independent Member)

Ms C Hicks (Independent Member)

Ms J Bond (Parish Representative)

Mr M Evans (Parish Representative)

Mr J Harris (Parish Representative)

Mr J Watson (Parish Representative)

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### 1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Ms J Collins (Independent Member).

### 2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 29 March 2009 be approved and adopted.

### 3. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2010/11 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Lipscomb be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Committee for the 2010/11 Municipal Year.

4. **STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND – BULLETIN 48**  
(Report ST84 refers)

The Corporate Director (Governance) and Monitoring Officer made reference to a letter from Communities and Local Government Minister Andrew Stunell dated 20 September 2010, copies of which were circulated at the meeting. The letter outlined potential arrangements to follow the abolition of the Standards Board.

He explained that in the proposed framework of new rules, it was suggested that serious misconduct for personal gain would be a criminal offence to be dealt with by the Police. It was unclear whether the powers of the Local Government Ombudsman would be increased to investigate complaints by the public on Standards related issues. It was also uncertain at this stage if the successor body to the Standards Committee would retain a role with Parish Councils. The changes to the working of the Standards regime should also be seen in the context of other changes that could take place over the next year, including the possibility of the option to return to the traditional committee system.

The Corporate Director (Governance) also drew attention to Bulletin 48 and the paragraph referring to the reappointment of independent members. Given the current uncertainty regarding the future of the Standards regime, he asked the Committee to consider if it wished to recruit new members between February to March 2011, or to extend the term of office of existing Independent and Parish representatives for the duration of the current Standards regime. He added that although Ms Collins was absent from the meeting, she had indicated that she would agree to her appointment as an Independent Member being extended, if the Council so wished.

Following debate, all Independent Members and Parish Representatives supported the extension of their appointments. It was also seen by the Councillors present as being a practical approach.

The Committee also requested the Corporate Director (Governance) to keep the Committee informed as legislation developed on arrangements post the Standards regime.

At the conclusion of the meeting the Committee viewed a Standards for England training DVD regarding Local Assessment of Complaints.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the contents of Bulletin 48 from Standards for England be noted.
2. That the Corporate Director (Governance) keep the Standards Committee informed as legislation developed on arrangements post the Standards regime.

3. That Cabinet considers whether it wishes to recommend to Council that the term of office for all existing Independent Members and Parish Representatives be extended for a period of two years from 30 April 2011, due to the uncertainty caused by the pending legislation to make substantial changes to the Standards regime.

The meeting commenced at 6.15pm and concluded at 7.15pm

Chairman