

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2009 at 6.00 pm in Austen Room, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

**Present:** Mr Robin Hills (Chairman);  
Councillors: Day, Ms Green, King, Lawson, R Nicholson and Mrs Wiltshire  
Parish Councillors; Mrs C Buchanan and Neville  
Independent Members; Mr B Hinchley (Vice-Chairman)

**In Attendance:** Harvey Patterson, Head of Legal and Democratic Services  
Louise Caffery, Standards Officer

### 79. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence received

### 80. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 81. MINUTES

Minutes of the previous meeting accepted and signed

### 82. TRAINING

The committee noted that the council had not allocated a budget for standards training.

Moved by Cllr Z Wiltshire, seconded by Mrs L Frampton

Resolved:

- 1 The report be noted
- 2 That all members of the committee attend the training on 30/09/09 (two apologies currently)
- 3 That the Monitoring Officer reports to Council on 15 October 09 as set out in Paragraph 1.4 of the report.

### 83. DRAFT PROTOCOL ON BLOGGING

The report was presented by the Monitoring Officer. It is an officer led consultation document in two parts: 1-4 Guidance, Part 5, Protocol. The initial work was commissioned through Solace and amended by Harvey Patterson. Its core intention is to stem the Cllr on Cllr complaints which ultimately damage the Council and public trust in the Council. The guidance outlines a process to resolve complaints initially within party groups before moving to a formal complaint should that route prove unsuccessful, reserving the standards process for members of the public. If implemented successfully then there would be considerable cost savings in investigating complaints.

After discussion the majority of the committee requested the Monitoring Officer to remove Paragraph 5:11 from the report.

The standards committee were asked to note that the Labour Group had no control over their blogging members. The members were acting as individuals, not Labour Councillors. The Monitoring Officer offered to attend the Group Meeting when the draft Protocol was on the agenda.

The Monitoring Officer was requested to expand the Protocol to include advice on social networking sites such as Facebook. Younger councillors appointed at future elections may seek guidance.

Proposed by B Hinchley, Seconded Cllr R Nicholson

Resolved:

- That the report be received (one abstention)
- That the guidance be noted (unanimous)
- That the protocol should be forwarded to Group Leaders for comment (having first taken out 5:11) (unanimous)
- That the Protocol should be brought back to the Standards Committee for further consideration at the 2 December 09 meeting. (unanimous)

**84. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT - THANET**

The committee noted the LGO Annual Report

**85. CLLR DAY JOINED THE MEETING**

**86. ASSESSING THE IMPACT & EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ETHICAL FRAMEWORK IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ENGLAND, INTERIM REPORT**

The committee noted the correlation between Local Authorities who had fewer complaints/breaches of the code, also had more training and better public perception scores.

**87. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINT STATISTICS**

Moved by Cllr Neville, Seconded by B Hinchley

Resolved: the code of conduct statistics noted.

**88. OTHER ACTION GUIDANCE**

The committee were asked to note that 'Other Action' was a disposal – the end of the complaint. The new guidance suggests that the Sub-committee should adjourn their assessment meeting to see if the subject member would accept 'other action'. This would leave the committee other alternatives if the subject member did not accept 'other action'.

The committee were asked to note that training could be 'Other Action' and was also a sanction at determination. However, training was rarely used in isolation as a sanction; it is usually in combination with other sanctions.

Recommendations 6.1 and 6.2: Proposed Cllr Lawson, Seconded Cllr Wiltshire.  
Resolved to accept recommendations 6.1 and 6.2 (unanimous)

Recommendation 6.3: Proposed by Cllr Neville, Seconded Cllr Wiltshire  
Resolved: to accept Recommendation 6.3 (unanimous)

**89. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting on agenda items 11 and 12 as they contain exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Proposed Cllr Lawson, Seconded B Hinchley

Resolved: The committee to move into private session

**90. TDCSC20/09**

The Chairman called for a 5 minute recess to enable committee members to read the document sent to them from Cllr Mark Nottingham in response to a decision notice he had received.

Moved by Cllr Neville, Seconded by Cllr Day

Resolved: The committee are satisfied with the outcome.

One against  
One abstention  
All others in favour.

**91. TDCSC17/09**

The committee received the Investigator's report.

Moved by Cllr R Nicholson, Seconded by Cllr Dennis Neville

Resolved: That complaint TDCSC17/09 be considered at a hearing conducted by the Standards Referrals and Hearings Sub-Committee.

1 against  
All others in favour.

**92. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

2 December 2009, at 6.00pm in the Austin Room.  
Apologies from Cllr Neville (Parish Council Meeting).

Meeting concluded : 8.10 pm