

MINUTES OF: THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 2nd July 2009

**PRESENT: Mr A Neville, Independent Member (Chairman)
Councillors Aldred, Cheetham, Grogan, Lynskey (substituting for
Councillor Sandiford), J Pilling, H. Steen, and P.Steen
Councillor Grogan, Whitworth Town Council
Mr A Nixon, Independent Member**

**IN ATTENDANCE: Philip Devonald, Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Helen Lockwood, Chief Executive
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Officer**

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN 2009/2010

Resolved:

That Mr Andrew Neville be appointed as Chairman for 2009/2010.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN 2009/2010

Resolved:

That Mr Bernard Divine be appointed as Vice Chairman for 2009/2010.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor A. Barnes, Councillor Sandiford Councillor D. Barnes, Whitworth Town Council and Mr F B Divine, Independent Member.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

5. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman reported that there were no urgent items of business.

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Joint Standards Meeting held on 24th February 2009 be agreed as a correct record.

7. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman informed the meeting that Carolyn Wilkins, Chief Executive, Linda Fisher, Executive Director – Business and Heather Moore, Committee and Member Services Manager had now left the authority and welcomed Helen Lockwood the new Chief Executive. He informed Members that on behalf of the Committee he had written to those that had left to thank them for their hard work in relation to Standards. He also welcomed Philip Devonald, the Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services, who would be with the authority until August, when Stuart Sugarman would commence as the Executive Director Business and Monitoring Officer.

8. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were raised under this item.

9. NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUMS PUTTING COMMUNITIES FIRST

Helen Lockwood, Chief Executive presented the report and updated the Committee of the consultations that had been undertaken and the meetings that the report had been to for comments. The report had been agreed at Full Council and the Standards Committee were being consulted in relation to the proposed constitutional changes and any issues relating to standards.

In considering the report Members discussed the following:

- Feedback from the Whitworth Forum
- There would be a mix of business meetings and public meetings
- Feedback from Haslingden Forum
- The consultation process
- Public perceptions
- Business meetings would be for information sharing from partner organisations

Resolved:

That there were no comments to report to Full Council from the Standards Committee.

10. STANDARDS AWARD

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Standards Award was now displayed in the Cabinet in the Council Chamber. Seventeen awards had been given on the evening which had gone to large councils, except for the Standards and Ethics Award that Rossendale had won. The Chairman thanked the Committee for their work and their great depth of experience in relation to standards. Many councils had asked for, and received, a copy of Rossendale's written submission. The Chairman also informed the Committee that the Standards Board for England had now changed its name to Standards for England.

11. STANDARDS ANNUAL ASSEMBLY CONFERENCE

The Chairman informed Members of the dates of the above conference and made a suggestion for the new Monitoring Officer to attend as well as himself and the Vice-chair.

In considering the conference Members discussed the following:

- The cost of the conference
- The importance of contributing following winning the award

Resolved:

That the Committee recommended the Chair, Vice-Chair and Monitoring Officer to attend the conference.

12. STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the Work Programme and requested any additional items for inclusion.

In considering the Work Programme Members discussed the following:

- Whistleblowing Policy and inclusion of contractors and partners

Resolved:

That the Work Programme for 2009/10 be agreed.

13. JOINT WORKING WITH BURNLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Standards Board had now issued a bulletin on Joint Working Arrangements, which detailed 3 model structures.

In considering joint working arrangements Members discussed the following:

- Considering other authorities
- Increasing the size of the Committee
- The arrangements for joint working
- Achieving the correct balance with joint working
- Public perceptions
- Sensitivities with neighbouring authorities
- Staff complaints
- Code of Conduct complaints

Resolved:

1. That the joint working arrangements continue to be discussed with Burnley Borough Council.

2. That other authorities in the area be contacted to see if they are interested in joint working.

14. UPDATE ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The consultation document had been returned in December 2008 and the changes to the Code of Conduct were due in April. This had been moved back until June and since then information had been received that it was now proposed to be released in October at the Standards Conference.

15. DELEGATION OF COMPLAINTS REPORT

The Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report and brought the comments received from the Standards Board to the attention of the Committee.

Resolved:

1. That determination of all cases remains with the Committee and its constituent sub-committees.
2. That the issue is reconsidered in 12 months following the issue of guidance by Standards for England.

16. STANDARDS BULLETIN

A copy of the Standards Board Bulletin was circulated for the consideration of the Committee and a copy of the bulletin published on 1st July was also available at the meeting in addition to publications on Dispensations and Joint Working Arrangements. The Chairman also informed the Committee that Robert Chilton was interested in coming to the October meeting to speak to the Committee.

Resolved:

That the bulletin be noted.

17. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Resolved:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) under Part 1 Paragraph 2 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

18. COMPLAINTS REPORT

The complaints report was circulated to the Committee detailing the number and nature of outstanding complaints. Many complaints recorded were duplications of the same complaint so the number of complaints was actually a lot less than appeared in the table. The purpose of circulating the information was to enable the Committee to monitor the process of

complaints.

In considering the report Members discussed the following:

- Having headings on each column
- Length of time between receiving a complaint and notifying the person complained about.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 7.45pm)

_____ CHAIRMAN