

**MINUTES OF: THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**Date of Meeting: 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010**

**PRESENT: Mr A Neville, Independent Member (Chairman)  
Councillors Aldred, A.Barnes, Morris (substituting for H.Steen) and Sandiford**

**IN ATTENDANCE: Stuart Sugarman, Director of Business  
Carolyn Sharples, Acting Committee and Member Services Manager**

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Essex**

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors H.Steen (Morris substituting), P.Steen, Councillor D Barnes, Councillor J Grogan Mr B.Divine and Mr A Nixon.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations were made.

**3. URGENT ITEMS**

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

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009 be agreed as a correct record.

**5. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

The Chair informed members that he had attended the Standards Conference along with the Director of Business and the Communications Manager. The Chair spoke at the conference and the Communications Manager ran two media sessions. The Chair had also addressed the CIPFA Annual Conference and a letter of thanks had been received.

It was noted that the Community Impact Assessment of Local Assessments would be on the agenda for the March meeting, and a representative from Standards for England, Freda Sharkey, would be invited to deliver a training session in May following the election and agreement of appointments to committees. The Director of Business would be meeting officers from Burnley in relation to discussing joint working.

The Chair informed the committee of the resignation of Councillor J Pilling and expressed his thanks for his contributions whilst on the Committee.

In relation to the Chair's Update members discussed the following:

- Scope of discussions with Burnley on joint working
- Dealing with standards complaints
- Bias
- Quorum
- Arrangements for sub-committees and hearings
- Increase in the number of non-elected independent members and parish councillors
- Confidentiality of hearings
- Bringing complaints before the Monitoring Officer
- Media protocol
- Public perception of the hearing process
- Legal advice available at hearings
- Selection criteria for non-elected members in relation to living/working within the borough
- Comparisons to arrangements in other authorities

In response to questions from members, the Director of Business confirmed that the resignation of Councillor J Pilling did not affect the political balance. No discussions had taken place with Burnley regarding joint working and the upcoming meeting was to ascertain at what level they wanted to look at joint working. Information would be brought back to a future meeting.

## **6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions were raised under this item.

## **7. 'ASSESSMENT MADE CLEAR' - STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND TRAINING DVD**

Members received training in relation to standards assessments in particular the review process.

In considering the training members discussed the following:

- Review of decisions
- Flow chart in the Constitution
- Statistics on rates of complaints on the Standards for England website
- Where complaints were being generated from e.g. public, councillors, etc.
- Confidentiality

The Director of Business informed members that the training DVD was available on loan from Committee and Member Services.

## **8. MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

The Acting Committee and Member Services Manager outlined the strategy which informed

members of the extent to which targets had been achieved for the 2008/2009 period.

In considering the report, members discussed the following:-

- Attendance on external training
- Attendance levels on in-house training
- Working towards the Member Charter and improving attendance
- Training undertaken outside the member training programme which is not registered
- Working with other authorities and outside bodies
- Sanctions if 5 sessions are not attended
- No training to be organised at pressure points e.g. public holidays
- Quality of training and impact on services we provide for residents
- Targets reviewed through the Member Development Working Group

**Resolved:**

- That the report be noted.

## **9. STANDARDS AWARD**

The Chair and the Director of Business updated members that following receiving the Standards Award the Council had shared information and best practice with approximately 6 other councils including sharing information on Media Guidance. This year 3 district councils had been shortlisted. Details of which councils had contacted Rossendale to share information were available on request.

## **10. RECRUITMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS**

The Director of Business updated members on the proposed process for the recruitment and appointment of Non-Elected Independent Members to the Standards Committee. He informed the committee that all 3 members terms were due to expire at the end of the municipal year and there was a need to place an advert to recruit to the posts. The recruitment would be a member decision and the report would also be going to the Governance Working Group for comment.

In considering the report Members discussed the following:-

- Increasing the number of Non-Elected Independent Members
- The number of Whitworth Town Councillors
- Using the title of Appointed Non-political Member
- Importance of member involvement in the recruitment process for Non-Elected Independent Members.

The Director of Business confirmed that questions regarding political affiliation and activity would be asked by members at the interview stage.

**Resolved:**

- That the Governance Working Group be asked to consider increasing the number of Non-elected Independent Members.

## **11. MEDIA PROTOCOL**

The Director of Business informed the committee that since the first draft of the Media Protocol a few amendments had been made. The protocol provided a helpful guide to dealing with the press in relation to Standards matters. Once the protocol was agreed the updated version would be distributed to all members.

### **Resolved:**

- That the Media Protocol be taken to the Governance Working Group.

## **12. 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.

## **13. STANDARDS COMPLAINTS UPDATE**

A verbal update was given to the Committee detailing the number of outstanding complaints.

In considering the update members discussed the following:

- Supporting a new approach to dealing with initial complaints.

### **Resolved:**

- That the update be noted.

**(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.10pm)**

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CHAIRMAN