

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY, 6 MARCH 2007 AT 7.30 PM

PRESENT: District Council Members

Councillor J Warren (Chairman).
Councillor H G S Banks.

Parish Councils' Representative

Mr B Taylor

Independent Members

Mr J Morphew
Mr A Walker

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor P A Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services (and Monitoring Officer)
Jeff Hughes	- Head of Democratic Services

636 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of
Mrs E Woods (Town Councils' representative).

637 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman congratulated Simon Drinkwater on his

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recent appointment to the post of Director of Neighbourhood Services. He advised that Simon would continue in his role as the Council's Monitoring Officer.

RESOLVED ITEMSACTION638 MINUTES

Mr B Taylor highlighted that his title was detailed as "Mrs" in the list of those present in the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2006. The Committee agreed to confirm the minutes of the meeting as a correct record subject to the correction of Mr Taylor's title.

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 15 November 2006 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment to the Mr Taylor's title in the list of those in attendance:

substitution of the title "Mr" for the title "Mrs".

639 A REVISED MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report inviting it to consider the Government's consultation paper on a draft of a proposed new Model Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members.

The Committee noted the draft revised code was the Government's response to the recommendations of the Standards Board for England who conducted a review of the present code in 2005. The deadline for submission of comments was 9 March 2007.

The Monitoring Officer drew the Committee's attention to an appendix to the report that contained commentary on the detailed amendments proposed.

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The Committee noted the proposed amendments to the model code relating to:

- unlawful discrimination;
- bullying;
- disclosure of confidential information - in response to the specific question on this proposal, the Committee agreed that the proposed text on the disclosure of confidential information did strike an appropriate balance in the circumstances detailed;
- behaviour outside official duties - in response to the specific question on this proposal, the Committee accepted the proposed text which limited the proscription of activities in members' private capacity to those activities which had already been found to be unlawful by the courts ;
- the commission of a criminal offence before taking office;
- using or seeking to use improper influence
- publicity code - in response to the specific questions on this proposal, the Committee felt that the Code did serve a useful purpose and that all authorities should be required to follow its provisions;
- reporting breaches of the code and proscribing intimidation;
- gifts and hospitality - in response to the specific question on this proposal, the Committee felt that current arrangements were appropriate;
- body influencing public opinion or policy;
- interests of family, friends and those with a close

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personal association - in response to the specific question on this proposal, the Committee felt that the proposed text represented an improvement compared to the provisions within the current code;

- definition of personal interests;
- disclosure of personal interests;
- public service interests;
- prejudicial interests – list of exemptions - in response to the specific question on this proposal, the Committee agreed that it would be appropriate for new exceptions to be included as additions to the list of items which were not to be regarded as prejudicial;
- overview and scrutiny committees;
- participation in relation to prejudicial interests - in response to the specific question on this proposal, the Committee welcomed the revision detailed;
- sensitive information;
- national park and board authorities – prejudicial interest;
- register of members' interests, and
- gender neutrality of language - in response to the specific question on this proposal, the Committee supported the use of the word “you”.

The Committee agreed to request the Monitoring Officer to respond to the specific questions listed within the consultation paper on the basis now detailed.

RESOLVED - that the Monitoring Officer be requested to respond to the specific questions listed within the Government's consultation paper on a

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draft of a proposed new Model Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members on the basis now detailed

640 CASE SUMMARIES AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report detailing case summaries issued by the Standards Board for England which were within the remit of the Committee.

The Committee noted the detail of the case summaries.

The Monitoring Officer drew the Committee’s attention to an appendix to his report. The appendix detailed recent cases of particular note on a national basis relating to:

- the suspension of a councillor with a conflict of interest;
- the disqualification of a former Mayor of a Town Council for improper conduct toward a clerk, and
- the implications of the judgement in the Mayor Livingstone case.

The Committee agreed to receive the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

The meeting closed at 8.23 pm.

Chairman
Date

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