

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2006 AT
7.30 PM

PRESENT: District Council Members

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

Parish Council's Representative

Mrs B Taylor

Town Council's Representative

Mrs E Woods

Independent Member

Mr J Morpew

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Linda Bevan | - Committee Secretary |
| Simon Drinkwater | - Director of Corporate Governance/ Monitoring Officer |
| George Robertson | - Head of Legal Services |

372 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Wood and Mr A Walker.

ACTIONRESOLVED ITEMS373 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee considered whether or not to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion of the item of business detailed at Minute 376 below on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The Committee agreed that this item should not be considered in public and the Monitoring Officer would issue a notice of the decision.

RESOLVED - that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the item of business detailed in Minute 376 below on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

374 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 11 July 2006 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

375 LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER – STRONG AND PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES

The Director of Corporate Governance submitted a report on the Local Government White Paper entitled “Strong and Prosperous Communities”. The aim of the White Paper was to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives. It also contained proposals relating to standards of conduct. The Government had indicated that it intended to create a more locally based conduct regime with a revised role for the Standards Board. In addition, the Code of Conduct would be revised to allow members to speak and vote on planning and licensing matters unless their interest was

ACTION

greater than most other people in the ward.

The Director explained that the Standards Board would have a more strategic role in future and offer supervision, support and guidance for local authorities and ensure consistent standards. Standards Committees would make initial assessments of misconduct allegations and most investigation and decisions would be made at local level. Arrangements had been made with other authorities in Hertfordshire to share staff who would act as investigating officers in these cases.

Members considered the proposals and noted that if more serious cases were to be considered by the Standards Committee it might need powers to impose greater penalties than the current three month suspension.

The Chairman commented that he felt East Herts Council was well advanced in dealing with investigations and asked that the Committee's thanks to the Director of Corporate Services for this be recorded.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted and the Director of Corporate Services be thanked for his help in developing the work of the Standards Committee.

376 COMPLAINT IN RESPECT OF A TOWN COUNCILLOR
– STANDARDS BOARD REFERENCE SBE 14298.06

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report on a complaint in respect of a member of a Town Council.

The complaint had been investigated. A letter from the complainant was circulated giving more details relating to the case at the meeting. The Investigating Officer concluded that there had been no breach of the Code of Conduct. The Investigating Officer commented that the further information provided in the letter circulated did not change this conclusion.

ACTION

Members considered the report and questioned the Investigating Officer on the conclusion. The Committee noted it had to decide whether, based on the facts set out in the report, it agreed with the finding that there was no case to answer.

A notice of the decision would be prepared but if it was found that the Code of Conduct had not been breached then the subject of the complaint could ask that this should not be published in the press. Members approved this request.

After careful consideration the Committee decided that there was no case to answer as there was no evidence of any failure to comply with the Code of Conduct and no further action would be taken.

RESOLVED – that (A) all parties concerned be informed that the Committee considers there is no case to answer as there is no evidence of any failure to comply with the Code of Conduct and no further action be taken;

DCG

(B) the request from the subject of the complaint that the notice of the decision should not be passed to the press be approved and noted.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

| | |
|----------|-------|
| Chairman | |
| Date | |

G:\BSWP\NPS\Standards\15 Nov 2006\Minutes 15 Nov 2006.doc