

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD IN THE
ROOM 27, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 6 JULY 2010, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

District Council Members:

Councillors R L Parker, P A Ruffles,
J P Warren and M Wood

Town Councils' Representatives:

Mrs E Woods

Independent Members:

Mr S Bouette
Mr D Farrell
Mr J Morphew (Chairman)
Mr T Vickers

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Jeff Hughes	- Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services

123 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr J Jones and Mr C Marks.

RESOLVED ITEMS

124 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED – that Mr J Morphew be elected Chairman of the Standards Committee for the 2010/11 Civic Year.

125 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

126 DRAFT 2009/10 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Committee considered a report by the Leader of the Council on the Authority's draft 2009/10 Annual Governance Statement.

The Leader invited the Committee to comment, if it wished, on the content of the draft Statement.

The Committee noted that production of the Statement was a statutory requirement, forming part of the Authority's corporate governance and internal control framework.

The Committee further noted the information that should be included within the Statement (as detailed in the report now submitted).

Members agreed to make the following suggested amendments to this document:

- deletion of the first sentence of narrative under the heading "Promoting values of the Council ..."
- deletion of the first sentence in the second paragraph of narrative under the heading "Promoting values of the Council ..."
- revised wording under the heading "Review of

Effectiveness” to provide succinct but complete information on the activities and (volume of) work undertaken by the Standards Committee during the period in question.

In response to Member comments on the likelihood of changes to the existing standards framework, the Monitoring Officer commented that he would report to a future meeting inviting the Committee to determine what submission it would like to make on this matter to Government.

RESOLVED – that, in relation to the draft 2009/10 Annual Governance Statement, the suggested amendments now detailed be submitted to the Audit Committee for consideration.

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127 ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW CRITERIA - INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF STANDARDS COMPLAINTS - MONITORING OFFICER PROTOCOL

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report inviting the Committee to consider adopting revised assessment and review criteria for complaints and also a protocol for their initial assessment.

The Monitoring Officer stated that experience of the current complaints procedures had demonstrated the helpfulness of setting out criteria that the Assessment Sub-Committee could use to assess allegations was helpful.

The suggested assessment and review criteria now submitted for approval had been produced following a training event for this Committee’s members to consider the Authority’s existing processes and to identify lessons to be learnt.

The Committee noted that the suggested criteria covered:

- situations where the Assessment Sub-Committee had no jurisdiction;
- the procedure for determining whether or not a

complaint appears to show that a breach of a code has occurred;

- options open to the Sub-Committee where there appears to have been a breach of a code;
- confidentiality;
- withdrawal of complaints before the Assessment Sub-Committee has had an opportunity to consider the allegation;
- review of Assessment Sub-Committee “no action” decisions by the Review Sub-Committee, and
- recording and notification of decisions.

In relation to the protocol, the Monitoring Officer advised that this contained instructions for the discharge of functions relating to the initial assessment and review of breach of code allegations. It also dealt with the guidance for the Monitoring Officer for local resolution and investigation of complaints.

The Committee agreed that, subject to replacement of the word “purports” with the word “seeks” in the first sentence under section 7 of the Assessment and Review Process and Criteria, this document and the protocol, appended to the report now submitted, be adopted.

RESOLVED – that (A) the assessment and review criteria, set out in Essential Reference Paper ‘B’ to the report and subject to the amendment detailed, be adopted, and

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(B) the Monitoring Officer Protocol for the initial assessment of complaints, set out in Essential Reference Paper ‘C’ to the report, be adopted.

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The meeting closed at 7.55 pm