

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Standards Committee Wednesday, 13 June 2007 Committee Room 2, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors B. Badrock (Chairman), T. Luxton, Parish Councillor R. Crawford and Councillors Parker and Wharton

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Lewis and Redhead

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: R. Barnett, L. Cairns and M. Winstanley

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE

Action

(Prior to the start of the meeting the Chairman welcomed Mark Winstanley, the Interim Head of Legal Services, to the meeting. It was advised that Mark Reaney had been appointed to the post of Operational Director and Monitoring Officer (Legal, Organisation Development and Human Resources) and was expected to join the Council in mid September 2007.)

STC1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2007, having been printed and circulated, were signed as a correct record.

STC2 STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND ROADSHOW 2007

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy regarding the Standards Board for England Roadshow 2007, which had been attended by the Chairman, the Interim Head of Legal Services and Councillor Parker.

It was advised that the main focus of discussion at the event had been the newly published Code of Conduct. Although the courts were moving towards allowing councillors to taking part in decision making rather than

excluding them, issues around pre-determination and bias still had to be taken into account. This would need consideration in a number of forthcoming decisions to be made and the Interim Head of Legal Services agreed to produce some guidance in this respect.

In addition to the above, the Committee also considered the implications of interests of Members of the Standards Committee with regards to hearing complaints.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) guidance be produced on pre-determination and bias, and on Standard Committee Member interests.

Interim Head of
Legal Services

STC3 NEW MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy regarding the recent adoption of the newly published Code of Conduct by the Council and its main implications.

It was noted that training was being arranged for all Members, due to take place on 11 July 2007. In the interim, all Councillors had been supplied with the Standard Board's written Guidance on the way in which the new Code operated. In addition, the Parish Councils were to be visited in the forthcoming months to provide them with guidance on the new Code.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) it be noted that the Council has complied with its statutory obligation to adopt the new Code of Conduct by 2 October 2007; and
- (2) the Chairman and Mr Luxton be included on the mailing list in respect of the training event to take place on 11 July 2007.

Interim Head of
Legal Services

STC4 ACTION PLAN

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy containing a draft action list, which had been prepared following the Away Day on 8 December 2006 and the further training session and role play with Graeme Creer on 28 February 2007.

Members discussed adopting the Action Plan as the basis of a work programme to be included with each agenda and considered how individual actions should be prioritised. It was agreed that training was paramount and items 1 and 2 on the list needed to be merged. In addition, the Interim Head of Legal Services undertook to examine how a network could be established to share information on a regional and sub-regional basis.

RESOLVED: That the action plan be agreed and used as a work programme, to be updated and included with each agenda.

Interim Head of
Legal Services

STC5 STANDARDS BOARD INFORMATION ROUND UP

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy highlighting the latest news from the Standards Board: Bulletin numbers 32 and 33 were included with the agenda.

In particular, it was noted that the Annual Assembly was to be held in Birmingham in October and the Committee agreed that an officer and two Members, one of whom should be the Chairman, would attend.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) three places be booked on the Annual Assembly in October 2007.

Interim Head of
Legal Services

Meeting ended at 4.20 p.m.