

Minutes

Standards Committee
Wednesday, 2 June 2010
Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



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Come into effect on: Immediately

Members Present:

Allan Edwards (Chairman), Malcolm Ellis (Vice-Chairman), James Keys (Independent member), Councillors Corthorne, Gilham, Harmsworth, Hensley, Khursheed, Markham and Riley

Officers Present: Raj Alagh and Lloyd White

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Barrett (for whom Councillor Gilham was substituting) and Councillor Lewis.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 1 March and 13 May 2010 be taken as a correct record.

With regard to item 17 of the minutes of 1 March, 'Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality', it was noted that satisfactory explanations had been received for two of the outstanding items – those of a gift of alcohol and a trip to India – but that information was still awaited on a third – that of a gift of a DVD player. The Head of Democratic Services would be pursuing this matter and would report the findings to the Committee.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. CONFIRMATION THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THOSE MARKED PART II, IN PRIVATE

5. STANDARDS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROCEDURES FOR COMPLAINTS

The Chairman welcomed all the new Members of the Committee to their first meeting and the Borough Solicitor outlined in detail the Terms of Reference of the Committee and the procedures in place for hearing allegations against elected Members accused of breaching the Code of Conduct. Members were assured that the Terms of Reference were in line with recommended practice and in fact went further than required in also being responsible for monitoring the Officer Code of Conduct. It was agreed that all the Members of the Committee would be provided

with more detailed training by the Borough Solicitor and Head of Democratic Services on the operation of the Standards Committee in conjunction with the general training to be given to all Members about the Code of Conduct. The Head of Democratic Services would liaise with the Chief Whips in relation to possible dates for both sets of training.

6. REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme for 2010/11 was reviewed and the dates of future meetings noted. It was noted that a report on revised Member and Officer Codes of Conducts would be brought to the Committee when they were issued. The training DVD 'Assessment Made Easy', which had been partially viewed by the Committee, would be used as a part of the training to be given to the Committee in the near future.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted.

7. STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND BULLETIN

The latest edition of 'The Bulletin' was noted. The changes to the body formerly known as The Adjudication Panel were discussed in detail and it was noted that the new body, now known as the First-tier Tribunal (Local Government Standards in England), would operate in a slightly different way and could now consider the award of costs. This was something that the Committee felt should be made known to Subject Members before they considered appealing to the new body.

The increased use of social networking was highlighted in The Bulletin and it was agreed that this aspect should be incorporated into the training to be given to Members about the Code of Conduct.

8. COMPLAINTS MONITORING

This item was discussed in Part II without the press or public present as it contained confidential information as defined in the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

The Committee noted details of all the complaints made against Members to date. The two most recent complaints were highlighted and it was noted that these had both arisen from Members use of ICT and potential confusion about the rules in this regard. It was agreed, therefore, that this aspect should be incorporated into the training to be given to Members about the Code of Conduct.

It was noted that the recent Queen's Speech had included a proposal for the abolishment of Standards for England in its current format. Details of its replacement were awaited with interest.