

Minutes

Standards Committee
Tuesday, 1 December 2009
Meeting held at High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW



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Members Present:

Allan Edwards (Chairman)
Malcolm Ellis (Vice-Chairman)
James Keys
Councillor Philip Corthorne
Councillor John Hensley
Councillor Paul Harmsworth
Councillor Mo Khursheed
Councillor Mary O'Connor

Apologies:

Councillor Catherine Dann
Councillor David Yarrow

Officers Present:

Raj Alagh
Nav Johal

8. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Were received from Councillor Yarrow (substituted by Councillor O'Connor), Councillor Dann and Lloyd White, Head of Democratic Services.

9. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

11. WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The Chairman introduced the report. The Work Programme enabled the Committee to track the progress of its work in accordance with good project management practice. Members discussed the Work Programme and agreed on some further additions.

Members discussed the revised officer code of conduct which will be introduced next year, and whether it would be a blanket code for all officers. Members also discussed member training programmes, including new member training and the member complaints process. Reports on Standards & Ethics indicators, and Gifts & Hospitality are discussed at Standards Committee annually. It was noted that this needed to be included for the work programme in 2010. Members were told that the policy on officer declarations of gifts and hospitality is in the process of being revised and will be brought to the Standards Committee for comment. Members discussed gifts and hospitality relating to members and agreed that the Monitoring Officer should send a reminder to all members on the rules in the run up to Christmas.

RESOLVED: That

- a) **the Work Programme be noted by Members.**
- b) **amendments be made to the Work Programme to include the following:**
 - **2 March 2010: Report on Revised Code of Conduct for Officers**
 - **2 March 2010: Report on Amendment to Members Code of Conduct.**
 - **Standards & Ethics indicators.**
 - **Declarations of Gifts & Hospitality.**
- c) **the Committee agreed that the Monitoring Officer should send a note to all Members on the rules relating to gifts & hospitality.**

12. STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND BULLETIN NO.45

The latest edition of 'The Bulletin' was noted. Members discussed the sanction of written apologies under the Members code of conduct. Members agreed that wording of an apology should not be specified, but the board parameters of who to apologise to and when by.

13. CRITERIA FOR GRANTING DISPENSATIONS

Members noted the paper that was introduced by the Head of Legal Services. There were 4 criteria set by the Standards Board's Guidance. This was discussed and noted that it was a good starting point, and in the future other points may be considered. Members were asked for their views on the draft criteria before the Head of Legal Services wrote to all Members and Co-opted Members of the Council on the criteria which would be applied by the Committee when considering applications for dispensations.

Resolved –

- 1. Members agreed to adopt this paper.**
- 2. The Head of Legal Services to write to all Members and Co-opted Members of the Council setting out the criteria for applications for dispensations.**

14. AUDIT OF MEMBERS' EXPENSES

Members noted the report Audit on Members expenses. It was noted that auditors gave full assurance that the controls in place to manage Members expenses are effective. Members discussed whether a breakdown of expenses should be brought to the Committee. This is posted on the Council website every year. The Committee requested that they be sent this link.

15. AUDIT OF MEMBERS' COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Members noted the auditors report on complaints against Members. It was noted that the auditors gave their full assurance that the controls in place to manage complaints against Members were effective.

Members discussed whether more should be done to publicise the complaints policy to members of the public. This was raised as it was noted that nationally the average percentage of complaints from members of the public against Members was 55%. At Hillingdon this figure is 0%. All 13 complaints to date have been made by Members. The Council had satisfied the requirement of the legislation in publishing the Complaints Procedure.

The cost implications of additional advertising was considered. Members agreed that publicising in Hillingdon People in a positive way was a good way forward.

Resolved –

- 1. Members agreed with the action plan that a summary sheet should be placed at the front of the files showing what stage the complain is at and the decisions made so far, including dates.**
- 2. Members agreed that the Monitoring Officer should liaise with the Marketing and Publications officer to arrange the publication of the procedures in local papers and leaflets or posters being available in libraries and other public places.**

16. ASSESSMENT MADE CLEAR

Members watched a dvd from Standards for England on 'Assessments made clear'. It was agreed that Members were to watch the remainder of the dvd and any issues could be discussed at the next Committee meeting.
