

Minutes

**Standards Committee
Wednesday, 1 June 2011
Meeting held at Committee Room 3 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW**



**Published on: 3 June
Come into effect on: Immediately**

Present: Allan Edwards (Chairman), Malcolm Ellis (Vice-Chairman), James Keys (Independent member), Councillors Gilham, Harmsworth, Hensley, Kemp, Lewis and Markham

Officers Present: Messrs Alagh and White

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barrett and Corthorne (for whom Councillors Gilham and Kemp were substituting) and Riley.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 1 March and 12 May were taken as read and confirmed.

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. REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's work programme for 2011/12 was noted.

6. FUTURE OF THE STANDARDS BOARD REGIME

At the last meeting, Members had discussed in detail the implications of the proposals contained in the Localism Bill to abolish the current Standards Board regime and the potential risks they presented to the future ethical standards of the authority. Members felt strongly that there should be a voluntary, local Code of Conduct so that the electorate could have confidence in the way Members conducted themselves and made decisions.

Accordingly Members considered a report setting out the various options available when considering the future of Standards within Hillingdon. It was noted that proposals arising from these options would form the basis of a recommendation to Council for a new system to be in place when the current Standards regime ceased to exist.

In addition Members noted that the Localism Bill contained a provision for the removal of the restriction on Members to express views or 'pre-determination' about an issue prior to considering it at a formal meeting of the Council. This, it was recognised, would have significant implications for the way Members conducted the business of the authority.

RESOLVED: That

- a) a working party comprising the Vice Chairman, Councillors Harmsworth and Hensley be established to consider the proposed content of a voluntary Code of Conduct for Members, based on the existing Code, local requirements, views of Members, experiences of other authorities etc. the Working Party to report back to the main Standards Committee.
- b) The Working Party be asked to consider the format of a complaints and disciplinary procedure to accompany the voluntary Code based on
 - o the adoption of a 'Whips Protocol' whereby initial referral of complaints by Members to the appropriate Whips' Office becomes the normal procedure. Should complaints remain unresolved then a formal procedure would be instigated in which the Whips' Office should not participate to assure complainants of the impartiality of the process.
 - o an independent peer review process - similar to the current set up whereby a sub-committee(s) of the main Standards Committee would assess and determine complaints to a format as approved by Council based on the existing system with consideration to be given to the 'Review' stage being discontinued.
- c) the Monitoring Officer draw up a list of sanctions in relation to proven breaches of the Code of Conduct for approval by Council once the exact and final contents of the Localism Act are known.
- d) The report to Council recommend the continuation of the Standards Committee with the inclusion of 3 independent members (including Chairman & Vice-Chairman) but on a fixed term of four years, to run concurrently with the municipal cycle (i.e. new appointments to be made in 2014).

7. COMPLAINTS MONITORING

This item was considered 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 complaints made against Members or determined in the last six months.