

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

11 SEPTEMBER 2009

Present :- Mr S. Farmer (Independent Member) Chairman
Mr Andrews (Independent Member)
Mrs Brown (Parish Council Representative)
Councillor Chapman
Ms Eden (Parish Council Representative)
Councillor Lewis
Mr Roberts-Mee (Independent Member)

9. Election of Chairman for the meeting

RESOLVED that Sven Farmer be elected Chairman for the meeting in the absence of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

10. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2009 were confirmed as a correct record subject to paragraph (d) of the resolution of minute 6 being amended to read:-

“(d) The Monitoring Officer to offer to provide advice to all Members appointed to serve on outside bodies on their responsibilities.”

and the fifth paragraph of minute 7 being amended to read:-

“In response to queries from the Committee it was confirmed that the whilst a member could rely on a dispensation for a period of four years, the actual circumstances in which it could be relied upon could be defined very tightly by the Committee when it granted the dispensation.”

11. Local Government Ombudsman - Annual Review 2008/2009

The Monitoring Officer presented a report about the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review for 2008/2009.

The Committee noted that due to a change in the way the Ombudsman handled complaints it was not possible to undertake a comparative exercise with previous years' figures. However, the Committee was pleased to note that no findings of maladministration had been made against the Council and no formal reports had been issued. There had been a slight increase in the amount of compensation paid out. Lessons had been learnt by the service areas where compensation had been paid.

It was noted that the average response time taken to respond to Ombudsman enquiries was longer than the target time. Officers were working with the Ombudsman's office and the relevant service areas to address this. In addition the increased use of e-mail by the Ombudsman's office should also help to reduce the time taken to respond.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review for 2008/2009 be noted.

12. Review of Training for Members on the Code of Conduct

The Monitoring Officer presented a report with an update of training for members on the Code of Conduct and Local Assessment process.

The Committee noted that the new Code of Conduct had not yet been introduced. It was anticipated that this may be introduced in either November 2009 or May 2010. Once introduced, a new programme of training on the new Code would be delivered. The Committee noted that a session had been arranged to update Borough Councillors on the Code of Conduct and the Local Assessment process and a separate session had been arranged for members of a Parish Council following a recommendation by the Allegations Sub-Committee. Members of the Standards Committee were welcome to attend to these sessions to help reinforce the message.

RESOLVED that the update on training for members on the Code of Conduct and Local Assessment process be noted.

13. Work Programme 2008/09 and 2009/10

The Monitoring Officer presented a report updating the work programme for the Standards Committee for 2009/10. The Committee noted that the work programme for 2008/09 had been completed and that the only items of business which had not been scheduled on the 2009/10 work programme were those where regulations from central government were awaited.

RESOLVED that :-

- (a) the completed work programme for 2008/09 be noted;
- (b) the work programme for 2009/10 be noted.