

Minutes of the Standards Committee

11th February, 2008 at 12.05 pm
at the Fire Service Headquarters, Birmingham

Present: Mr C Topliss (Chair);
Councillors Douglas-Maul, Jackson and Hussain;
Messrs Bagley and Denny.

Apologies: Councillors Eustace, Ryder and Singh.

1/08 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th September, 2007, be approved as a correct record, subject to the correction of the venue of the meeting to read 'Sandwell Council House, Oldbury'.

2/08 **Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007 – Ethical Standards**

The Committee noted that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 had received the Royal Assent on 30th October, 2007.

Part 10 of the Act concerned ethical standards and gave effect to the Government's proposals for the reform of the regime relating to standards of conduct for local government, which aimed to devolve most decision making on the conduct regime to local authorities, with a revised regulatory role for the Standards Board for England. Local Standards Committees would make initial assessments of misconduct allegations and would review assessments which led to no action being taken. The Standards Board was given powers to suspend a Standards Committee's role in making initial assessments of allegations. It could also issue guidance to Standards Committees and ethical standards officers.

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Provision was also made for decisions in respect of local authority posts subject to political restrictions to be undertaken by standards committees instead of the current arrangement through the Independent Adjudicator.

The Government intended the new arrangements to be in force by Spring 2008, although this was dependent on the relevant secondary legislation being in place.

The Committee discussed the implications of the new arrangements with particular regard to the monitoring role of the Standards Board for England; the relevance of Freedom of Information legislation; and the role of the Independent Adjudicator and the Adjudication Panel.

Resolved that a report be submitted to the next meeting on the role of the Independent Adjudicator and the Adjudication Panel.

3/08 **Consultation on Orders and Regulations relating to the Conduct of Local Authority Members in England**

The Committee considered a consultation paper issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government entitled: 'Consultation on Orders and Regulations relating to the Conduct of Local Authority Members in England' which set out the proposed detailed arrangements for implementing the locally-based ethical regime set out under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

The Committee were in agreement with many of the proposals set out in the consultation document but had concerns with a number of issues.

Resolved that the Monitoring Officer draw up an appropriate response to the consultation based on the comments now made by members.

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4/08 Checklist for Local Authorities in the run up to April 2008 – Standards Board

The Committee noted a checklist published by the Standards Board for England to assist local authorities assess their preparedness for the locally-based ethical standards regime to be implemented from Spring 2008. The Committee was well placed in its preparation for the new regime.

Resolved that further reports be submitted in due course as necessary.

5/08 Case Summaries

The Committee noted important cases published by the Standards Board for England as part of their learning in preparation for the new locally-based standards regime.

6/08 Date of next meeting

Monday 3rd March, 2008 at 1.30 pm [to be confirmed]

(The meeting ended at 1.10 pm)

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