

City of Durham

At a Meeting of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held in Studio 2, Gala Theatre, Durham, on Tuesday, 31st July, 2007, at 5.30 p.m.

Present: Mr B.R.J. Ingleby (in the Chair)
and Councillors Holland and Simpson (City Council Members)
and Councillor J.S. Anderson (Parish Council Member)
and Mr D. Hollingworth and Mrs T. Naples (Independent Members).

169. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Moderate and Thompson.

170. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 11th June, 2007, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Report of Monitoring Officer

171. APPOINTMENT OF PARISH REPRESENTATIVE

The Monitoring Officer had received a total of seven nominations for appointments as Parish Representatives to the Standards Committee. The nominees were:-

Tara Saville	Sherburn
Hillary Westwell	Witton Gilbert
Patricia Hudson	Shincliffe
Andrew Sowerby	Pittington
Marion Wilson	Bearpark
Lesley Catterson	Brandon & Byshottles
Christopher Pattinson	Belmont

Arrangements would now be made to interview candidates with a view to a recommendation for appointment being made to Full Council.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

172. ROADSHOW 2007

The Standards Board for England held a roadshow in the Assembly Rooms, Newcastle-upon-Tyne on 12th June, 2007.

The event was attended by the Vice-Chairman and the Monitoring Officer.

The roadshow was led by Mr David Prince, the Chief Executive of the Standards Board for England, and Mr Roger Taylor, one of the Board Members.

The main theme of the roadshow was the new Code of Conduct and there was also some discussion about the forthcoming changes in legislation which would substantially increase the role of Standards Committees in dealing with initial complaints.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

173. TRAINING EVENT FOR MEMBERS

Sedgefield Borough Council organised a training event on Standards issues, facilitated by Mr Peter Keith-Lucas of Bevan Britten Solicitors on Wednesday, 27th June, 2007.

Previous presentations given by Mr Keith-Lucas had proved to be very worthwhile and five places were reserved on the course. It was disappointing that in the event, only the Deputy Monitoring Officer and Councillor Thompson were able to attend. The City Council had no option, however, but to pay for the five places reserved.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

174. LOCAL AUTHORITIES (MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT) ORDER 2007

Council at its Meeting on 24th July, 2007, had adopted the new Model Code of Conduct as recommended by the Standards Committee, and with the addition only of a requirement that all offers of gifts and hospitality, whether accepted or not, over the value of £25.00, should be declared and recorded in the register. Training on the new Code would shortly be arranged for District and Parish Council Members.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That Parish Councils be urged to ensure, so far as they were able, that their Members attended the training to be offered.

175. AIMScE

The Vice-Chairman had received correspondence from the Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England (AIMScE) that one or two independent members of the Association had expressed disquiet and concern over the way in which the Chairman of their respective Standards Committees had been elected.

The letter went on to say that the customary way to elect a council sub-committee chair was to do it by means of a very brief meeting of each council sub-committee immediately after the council's annual meeting. This method did have administrative, bureaucratic and political advantages for elected members and officers in many cases.

The good practice (which was about to be enshrined in legislation) of having an independent member of the standards committee as chairman mitigated against this practice. The Association suggested that unless all independent members were invited to the annual meeting of the council it was better practice to deal with the election of the chairman by vote at the first meeting of the standards committee after the annual meeting. It was suggested that in this way, standards committees 'own' their chairman and asserted their required, but limited degree of independence and detachment from the council and the Association had suggested that this matter should be raised with standards committees nationally.

Members were reminded that the City Council no longer appointed Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of its respective committees in the way described.

Since the Standards Committee was first constituted it had been the policy of the City Council to have Independent members appointed to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman positions. At Annual Council in May this year, Mr Ingleby was appointed Chairman for a two year period, and Mrs Naples was appointed Vice-Chair. There were now three Independent members of the Standards Committee and it might be appropriate, when future appointments were made, to consider whether this method of appointment was appropriate.

Resolved: That consideration be given, if appropriate in 2009, to requesting Council to allow the Standards Committee to elect its own Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

176. NORTH EAST REGIONAL FORUM

Members were requested whether they wished to take the lead in setting up a North East Forum by way of networking with other Standards Committees.

Resolved: That the Vice-Chairman liaise with other representatives at the Annual Assembly of the Standards Board in October, and report back on whether there is general support for a Forum, and whether this would be beneficial.

177. BULLETIN 34

A copy of the latest Bulletin from the Standards Board for England was circulated for Members' information.

The meeting terminated at 6.10 p.m.

Chairman