

## **THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHESTER-LE-STREET**

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held in Conference Room No. 3, Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street on Thursday 25 August 2005 at 4.00pm.

### **PRESENT:**

Mr D Fisher (Independent Member and Chairman), Reverend E Davidson (Independent Member), Miss V McEwan (Independent Member), Mr M Graham (Independent Member), Mr M Dulieu (Parish Councillor), Councillor J J Evans and Councillor W Laverick.

Officers: C Potter (Monitoring Officer) and D Allinson (Democratic Services Assistant)

### **23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor C Carr

### **24 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 28 JULY 2005**

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the proceedings of the Meeting of the Committee held 28 July 2005, copies of which had previously been circulated to each Member, be confirmed as being a correct record."

The Chairman proceeded to sign the Minutes.

### **25 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

### **26 TRAINING BUDGET FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Monitoring Officer advised that at the last Meeting discussion took place on the issue of a training budget for the Standards Committee. He advised that work was still in progress on this matter and referred to previous discussions held with Officers.

Councillor Evans advised of his concerns in relation to the proposed changes for training requirements. He stated that the Standards Committee were an independent body and that he felt a decision on training for this Committee should be made by the Standards Committee. The Chairman agreed with Councillor Evans and also expressed his concerns on this issue advising that this matter had caused unnecessary delay of the arrangements for the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees.

The Monitoring Officer clarified that the Standards Committee had a statutory role to undertake and that he had a duty to ensure that the Council did not breach this obligation.

He mentioned the Parish Council Meetings he had attended and the training packs he had issued and outlined the amount of time and resources that would be required to deliver the necessary training. He advised of a rolling in-house training programme he was currently devising for District and Parish Councillors.

Discussion ensued on the need for a training programme for the Standards Committee and the Chairman requested that a training programme be produced for the next meeting detailing the requirements of the Committee for the next financial year. It was suggested that the Monitoring Officer make comparisons with other Authorities in relation to training needs for the Standards Committee.

The Monitoring Officer outlined the various issues which would need to be considered in the training requirements which he would incorporate in the training plan.

RESOLVED: "That the Monitoring Officer produce a training plan for this current financial year and for the next financial year."

## **27 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Monitoring Officer advised that after seeking permission four places had been reserved for the Fourth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees and it was confirmed that Mr D Fisher, Reverend E Davidson and Mr M Dulieu would attend along with the Monitoring Officer.

The Democratic Services Assistant had made provisional arrangements for hotel accommodation and had obtained details of rail travel which she discussed with the delegates at the end of the Meeting.

It was suggested that the dates of next year's conference be obtained in advance so that they could be incorporated in training programme for next year.

RESOLVED: "That the Democratic Services Assistant make the necessary hotel and travel arrangements for those Members attending the conference and the dates of next year's conference be obtained."

## **28 ARTICLE FOR DISTRICT NEWS**

The Chairman referred to the article he had drafted for the District News, a copy of which was attached with the agenda. This draft had now been edited through the Communications/Public Relations Officer and as a result was now less personal than the original draft.

Members of the Committee stated that this was an independent Committee and felt that they should be able to include the personal contents they felt necessary.

The Monitoring Officer advised of further amendments to the article and the Chairman gave thanks for his input. The Monitoring Officer spoke in relation to raising public awareness of the Committee through future articles in the District News. Mr Dulieu spoke on the importance of the continuity of articles to create awareness of the Committee.

The Monitoring Officer referred to registering Members interests and recording of gifts and hospitality on the Council's website and suggested that it would be useful to raise the subject of this at the conference to find out how to proceed in relation to data protection issues etc.

He advised that the Council's website was currently being developed at present and suggested providing a list of items to be included from the Standards Committee. It was agreed that future articles be presented at the Standards Committee for agreement prior to them being published.

RESOLVED: "That consideration be given to further articles for the District News and items to be included on the Council's website to further promote the awareness of this Committee."

## **29 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED: "That the next Meeting of the Committee be held on Thursday 22 September at 4.00pm."

The Meeting terminated at 5.05pm.