

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

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street on Thursday 22 September 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) and Councillor W Laverick.

Officers: C Potter (Monitoring Officer) and S Marshall (Democratic Services Assistant)

### **30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors C Carr and J J Evans.

### **31 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 25 AUGUST 2005**

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Committee held 25 August 2005, copies of which had previously been circulated to each Member, be confirmed as being a correct record, subject to the following amendment,

Minute No 26: be amended to '...the Standards Committee is an independent body...'

The Chairman proceeded to sign the minutes.

### **32 MATTERS ARISING**

The Chairman queried if any progress had been made in relation to a training budget for the Standards Committee.

The Monitoring Officer advised that since the last meeting of the Committee, the Council had made a decision that the training budget for officers be centralised and bids for funding be made annually and that the budget for Members also be centralised but not timed so that requests can be made to Human Resources when the need for training arises.

The Chairman requested that the Monitoring Officer prepare a report for the next meeting of the Committee identifying the training requirements of the Committee for the next year.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted and the Monitoring Officer prepare a report for the next meeting of the Committee identifying the training requirements of the Committee for the oncoming year."

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

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

### **34 TRAINING PROGRAMME AND RESOURCES**

The Monitoring Officer referred to the comments already made in relation to the training requirements of the Committee for the oncoming year and advised that on-going training was needed for all Members in order for them to carry out the role they were expected to.

Miss McEwan queried if it was the responsibility of individual Members to ask for training.

The Monitoring Officer advised that in his opinion a co-ordinated approach through himself would be beneficial so that individual training records for all Members could be kept.

Miss McEwan stated that she felt Members would end up competing against each other for funding for training and that this was a concern as the Standards Committee had statutory obligations and if training was not provided for Members then the Committee would be unable to carry out these duties.

The Monitoring Officer advised that this was still unresolved but that it would be dealt with if it became a problem as it was difficult to arrange training in advance due to many courses not being able to be booked that far in advance.

Reverend Davidson advised that at the Annual Assembly it had been mentioned that in the future cases may be referred for local jurisdiction and that if that were the case then Members of the Committee would need formal training.

The Chairman suggested that the Committee needed to raise the matter that separate funding for training for the Standards Committee was needed.

RESOLVED: "That the training requirements of the Committee and the associated funding be discussed at the next meeting of the committee."

### **35 CONFERENCE UPDATE**

The Chairman advised that himself, Reverend Davidson, Mr Dulieu and the Monitoring Officer had attended the Annual Assembly of Standards Boards and that he felt it had been an important training vehicle and that the Members who had attended had learnt a lot.

He also advised that a summary of the training sessions held would be published and would be available to all Members.

Discussion ensued with regard to the various sessions Members had attended.

Reverend Davidson asked if the Monitoring Officer could provide a copy of the report he had written in relation to the Assembly for the next meeting.

The Chairman advised that the Standards Board for England had produced a document entitled "Sample Survey of Independent Representatives at the Third Annual Assembly of Standards Committees 2004" and requested that this item be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted and

- (i) that the Monitoring Officer produce a report for the next meeting of the Committee relating to the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees
- (ii) that the "Sample Survey of Independent Representatives at the Third Annual Assembly of Standards Committees" be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee."

## **36 ARTICLES FOR DISTRICT NEWS AND COUNCIL WEBSITE**

The Chairman advised that he was disappointed with the article, which had appeared in the District News relating the Standards Committee, as the final version had not been as he had intended it to be due to editing.

The Monitoring Officer advised that there was currently a vacancy for a Parish Council Member and that the advertisement for this could be incorporated into the next article for the District News.

Mr Graham stated that although the District News was delivered to each household in the district, the public were still unaware of the Standards Committee and its function. He suggested that the wording of the next article be agreed by Members prior to publication.

The Chairman advised that he had spoken to the editor of the District News and been told that the editor has the right to the content of any articles.

The Chairman had hoped that the article would be personal but it had been edited to adopt the style of the District News which is not personal.

Reverend Davidson suggested that the Committee expressed its dissatisfaction with the response of the editor of the District News to the article.

RESOLVED “ That the Standards Committee agree the wording of the next article for the District News prior to its publication and that the Committee express its dissatisfaction with the response of the editor of the District News in relation to his response to the Chairman regarding the article published in the latest issue of the District News.”

**37 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED: “That the next meeting of the Committee be held on Thursday 27 October 2005 at 4.00pm.”

The Meeting terminated at 5.15pm.