

City of Durham

At a Meeting of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held in the Town Hall, Durham, on Thursday, 24th April, 2008, at 5.30 p.m.

Present: Mrs T Naples (in the Chair)
and Councillors Moderate and Simpson (City Council Members)
and Councillor J.S. Anderson and Mrs P Hudson (Parish Council Member)

617. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Ingleby, Mr Hollingworth, Councillor Holland and Councillor Thompson.

618. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 5th March, 2008, and 11th March, 2008, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

619. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

There were no declarations received.

Report of Monitoring Officer

620. COMPLAINTS TO THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND

(a) SBE 21393.08

Details of the above complaint had been set out.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

(b) SBE 21450.08

Details of the above complaint had been set out.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

(c) SBE 21260.08

Details of the above complaint had been set out.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

(d) SBE 21711.08

Details of the above complaint had been set out.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

(e) SBE 21712.08

Details of the above complaint had been set out.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

621. SEVENTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Annual Conference for Standards would take place on the 13th and 14th October, 2008, in Birmingham.

In view of the fact that the Standards Committee of City of Durham Council would be abolished on 1st April, 2009, consideration was given as to whether attendance at this conference by either Members or the Monitoring Officer could be justified.

Resolved: That an officer and a Member attend the event, with Mrs Naples being the Member unless Members absent from the meeting express a desire for a different Member to attend.

622. LOCAL ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

The regulation giving effect to the requirement for the Standards Committee to determine complaints at a local level had now been laid by Parliament. They would take effect from 8th May, 2008. The guidance however had not yet been published and accordingly, it was recommended that the meeting scheduled for 7th May, 2008, be cancelled, with a report to be brought to the next meeting on 22nd May, 2008, as to the operation of the local assessment procedure.

Resolved: That the meeting scheduled to be held on 7th May, 2008, be cancelled.

623. CORRESPONDENCE

(a) Letter from Councillor Morland of West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council

Councillor Morland had contacted the Monitoring Officer to express his concern as to the recommendations made by the Standards Committee on 5th March, 2008. He was particularly concerned that the Standards Committee appeared to have made judgments and criticisms of the Parish Council without hearing from the Parish Council itself.

The Standards Committee regretted that Councillor Morland had formed this view and confirmed that their recommendation for training was something which was routinely made when a hearing took place, regardless of the outcome, with a view to the council concerned working together more effectively in the future.

Resolved: That the Monitoring Officer write to Councillor Morland to express their regret at his interpretation of the recommendation and confirm that the aim of the recommendation was to try to help the parish council work together more effectively in future. No criticism of the Parish Council was intended.

(b) Letter from Mrs E Briggs, Clerk to West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council

Correspondence was received from Mrs Briggs following the apology which had been provided to her by Councillors Clark and Fawcett of West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council as a consequence of the hearing of the Standards Committee on 5th March, 2008. Mrs Briggs was concerned that the Councillors delivered a joint letter offering their apologies whilst making no reference to the conduct for which they were apologising.

The Monitoring Officer reported that, as the Standards Committee had not laid down precise requirements as to the content and manner of the apology, it was not appropriate to take any further action in this matter, however it would be appropriate

for future hearings where an apology was being required, for the Standards Committee to set out precisely the form and content of such an apology to ensure that such a situation did not arise in the future.

Resolved: That where the Standards Committee are requiring an apology following a hearing, the Committee set out precisely the form and content of an acceptable apology.

624. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor Moderate confirmed that, due to the increased likelihood of day time meetings, he was standing down from the Committee and would be replaced by Councillor Lodge with immediate effect. The Committee wished to offer it's full thanks to Councillor Moderate for his long service on the Committee and wished him all the best for the future.

The meeting terminated at 6.15 p.m.

Chairman