

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHESTER-LE-STREET

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standards Committee held in Conference Room No.4, Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street on Thursday 23 February 2006 at 4.00pm.

PRESENT:

Mr D Fisher (Independent Member and Chairman), Miss V McEwan (Independent Member), M Graham (Independent Member) and Councillor W Laverick.

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

57 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Reverend E Davidson, Councillor C Carr and Councillor S C L Westrip.

58 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 8 DECEMBER 2005

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held 8 December 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.

59 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

60 DRAFT ARTICLE FOR DISTRICT NEWS

The Chairman advised that he had produced a draft article for the District News and that he had passed it to the Monitoring Officer for his comments and feedback.

The Monitoring Officer advised that he would give feedback on the article and circulate it to Members for their feedback also.

RESOLVED: "That the Monitoring Officer give feedback on the draft article and circulate it to Members of the Committee."

61 TRAINING REQUIREMENTS AND FUNDING

The Monitoring Officer advised that the budget was being discussed at the Special Executive meeting that afternoon and that once the Committee were aware of the funds available they would be able to consider a training programme.

He also advised of the need to compile individual training records to be able to quantify the gaps and make arrangements for the necessary training whether via in-house or external training.

The Chairman requested that this item be discussed again at the next meeting of the Committee as the budget would have been set by then.

Mr Graham stressed the importance of following up training with practise sessions in order to avoid forgetting what has been learnt.

Miss McEwan commented that training could be obtained from other sources such as the internet and training DVDs, which would avoid the need to pay for training courses.

Councillor Laverick suggested that the Committee linked up with neighbouring authorities facilitating training sessions.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted and that the training requirements of the Committee be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee."

62 DIVERSITY TRAINING FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Officer advised that Councillor Westrip had requested that diversity training be on the agenda for the meeting but that he had had to attend a different meeting that afternoon.

He advised that it was important for Members to know that diversity training was available to them.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

63 REGISTER OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

The Monitoring Officer proceeded to give Members an update on the situation regarding the Register of Members Interests and the following points were made:

- There was now a Register of District Council Members' Interests. Copies of the forms could be given to Members to confirm the details held are correct.
- Parish Councils had had some level of training but there would be a reliance upon the Parish Council clerks to ensure the forms were completed and returned
- Progress has been slow but it was now moving forward
- The Monitoring Officer would report to the Committee in a few months time and he would show the registers to the Committee at that time

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted and the Monitoring Officer prepare a report for a future meeting of the Committee."

64 MECHANISM FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Officer advised that due to other commitments he had not been able to prepare a report on this matter but that he would endeavour to do so for the next meeting.

RESOLVED: "That the Monitoring Officer prepare a report for the next meeting of the Committee with regard to the mechanism for replacement of Independent Members of the Standards Committee."

65 FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Discussion ensued in relation to the frequency of meetings of the Committee.

The Chairman suggested that meetings were held every other month with the possibility of training sessions being held the month in between.

The Monitoring Officer advised that he would prepare a report for the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: "That the Monitoring Officer prepare a report regarding the frequency of meetings for the next meeting of the Committee."

66 NEWS RELEASE

Consideration was given to the Press release relating to the ministerial announcement to introduce legislation to enable the initial decision about whether a complaint should be investigated to be made by local authorities' standards committees.

RESOLVED: "That the content of the news release be noted."

67 BULLETIN NO.26

RESOLVED: "That the contents of Bulletin No.26 be noted."

68 BULLETIN NO.27

RESOLVED: "That the contents of Bulletin No.27 be noted."

69 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Monitoring Officer advised that a letter had been received from Darlington Borough Council's Standards Committee regarding the possibility of establishing an Independent Member Forum in the Northern Area and whether any of the Committee would be interested in setting up a forum.

Copies of the letter and the reply pro-forma were given to Members and it was requested that the forms, showing the level of interest from Members, be returned to the Monitoring Officer as soon as possible.

70 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: "That the next meeting of the Committee be held on Thursday April 27th 2006 at 4.00pm."

The meeting terminated at 4.55pm.