

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 20 July 2006 at 4.00pm.

PRESENT:

Reverend E Davidson (Chairman and Independent Member), Mr D Fisher (Independent Member), Miss V McEwan (Independent Member), M Graham (Independent Member), M Dulieu (Parish Council Representative), Mrs G Stephenson (Parish Council Representative) and Councillor W Laverick.

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

1 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman invited from nominees for Vice Chairman.

Miss McEwan was nominated, seconded and appointed as Vice Chairman.

RESOLVED: "That Miss V McEwan be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Committee."

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors C Carr and S C L Westrip.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 25 MAY 2006

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held 25 May 2006, copies of which had previously been circulated to each Member, be confirmed as being a correct record."

The Chairman proceeded to sign the minutes.

4 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

5 WELCOME THE NEW PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Gill Stephenson, Great Lumley Parish Council Representative, to the meeting and introduced her to the Committee. The Committee in turn introduced themselves to Mrs Stephenson.

Mr Graham entered the meeting at this point.

6 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Officer advised of the need to produce an Annual Report of the Committee giving an introduction, a statement from the Chairman, Membership, details of work carried out and training undertaken and the Committee's Terms of Reference.

He then handed out a document giving a summary of work carried out and training undertaken during the period May 2005 to April 2006. He advised the Committee that if Members were happy with the proposed format of the report, he would prepare a draft report for the next meeting of the Committee.

Discussion ensued in relation to the need to promote awareness of the Standards Committee and for the Annual Report of the Standards Committee to be made available to the public.

The Chairman suggested that the Monitoring Officer prepare a draft report and forward this to Members of the Committee prior to the next meeting in order for Members to be able to consider the report and prepare comments for discussion at the next meeting.

The Monitoring Officer advised that he would prepare a report and attach the Terms of Reference to the report for Members information.

RESOLVED: "That the Monitoring Officer prepare a Draft Annual Report of the Standards Committee, attaching the Terms of Reference, for the next meeting of the Committee."

7 DRAFT ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Monitoring Officer advised of the need to insist on holding individual training records for Members, as Members would be in breach of the code if not fully trained.

He also advised of the need to ensure Members are familiar with the local investigations procedure.

Mr Graham suggested interaction with other Local Authorities and the use of case studies.

Mr Dulieu agreed and suggested carrying out a mock local investigation hearing as a training exercise.

The Monitoring Officer agreed that this would be a useful exercise but that due to his limited capacity there may be problems with his availability of time to prepare, practise and deliver such an exercise.

Mr Dulieu suggested using an external facilitator and the Chairman requested that the Monitoring Officer look into this matter.

RESOLVED: "That the Monitoring Officer investigate the use of external training facilitators to deliver a mock local investigation hearing and report back to the next meeting of the Committee."

8 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES

The Monitoring Officer gave the three designated delegates for the Assembly a "Delegate Pack" each and advised there were forms, which would need to be completed and forwarded to the Standards Board.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

9 BMG RESEARCH

The Monitoring Officer advised that a company named BMG Research had contacted him with regard to obtaining some information for research purposes. He advised that he had issued letters to Members seeking approval to release such information and hadn't had any further contact from the company.

The Chairman suggested that the information be given to the company but that the Monitoring Officer wait until further contact was made.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted."

10 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: "That the next meeting of the Committee be held on Thursday 28th September 2006 at 4.00pm."

The meeting terminated at 5.27pm.