

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 28 September 2006 at 4.00pm.

PRESENT:

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

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

11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Mr M Graham, Councillors S C L Westrip and W Laverick.

12 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 20 JULY 2006

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held 20 July 2006, copies of which had previously been circulated to each Member, be confirmed as being a correct record."

13 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

14 DECISION TRACKER

The Monitoring Officer advised Members that the Decision Tracker had been adopted by the Council in other meetings such as the Executive and was used to monitor action taken on decisions made.

He went on to update Members on the progress made on each item on the Decision Tracker.

The Chairman requested that a worksheet of the work to be done up to May 2007 be prepared for the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: "That the contents of the decision tracker be noted and a worksheet of the work required up to May 2007 be prepared for the next meeting of the Committee."

15 LARGE SCALE VOLUNTARY TRANSFER (LSVT) – PROTOCOL

The Monitoring Officer issued copies of a report entitled “LSVT – Conflict of Interest” and advised that the purpose of the report was to secure the support of the Standards committee for arrangements to avoid conflicts of interest during the LSVT process.

Discussion ensued with regard to the draft protocol and the Monitoring Officer advised that if the Committee agreed the recommendations made in the report, the report would be submitted to the Council and if approved would form part of the revised Constitution.

RESOLVED: “That the Committee;

- a) note the contents of the report
- b) recommend the approval of the draft protocol set out in Appendix II
- c) request the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to prepare and issue appropriate guidance for both staff and elected Members.”

16 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to the Draft Annual Report of the Standards Committee, issued by the Monitoring Officer at the meeting.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the purpose of the report was to inform everyone about the role of the Committee and to summarise the work undertaken for the year.

He went on to highlight the main points of the report and invited comments from the Committee.

Discussion ensued with regard to the Members Code of Conduct and Registers of Interest.

The Chairman suggested that the report be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: “That the Draft Annual Report of the Standards Committee be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.”

17 PUBLICATION OF FUTURE ARTICLES

The Chairman advised that the deadline for the next issue of the District News was 13 October and that he would prepare an article for that deadline.

Discussion ensued with regard to raising awareness of the Committee and the funds available to do so.

The Monitoring Officer suggested that the Standards Committee's Budget be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

He suggested that those attending the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees could bring back any relevant literature that could be used to promote awareness.

He also suggested partnership working with other authorities by liaising with other Monitoring Officers and taking evidence of any publicity they may be carrying out.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted and the Standards Committee's Budget be considered at the next meeting of the Committee."

18 MOCK LOCAL HEARING

The Monitoring Officer advised that the Standards Board have produced a DVD on the Local Hearing Process and that he has ordered a copy. He went on to suggest that he would set up a mock hearing for October.

Mr Dulieu advised that he had spoken to someone who had been involved in a local hearing and he was amazed at the actual mechanics of holding a hearing and also the cost of carrying out the enquiry.

The Monitoring Officer advised of the time limits imposed to complete a hearing and suggested that the mock local hearing be built in to the work plan.

Miss McEwan suggested that a training session be held were all Members of the Committee could view the DVD at the same time and hold a question and answer session afterwards.

The Monitoring Officer advised he would arrange this once the DVD had been received.

RESOLVED: "That a training session on the Local Hearing Process be arranged and the Monitoring Officer arrange to hold a mock hearing during October."

19 BULLETINS NOS. 28, 29 AND 30

Consideration was given to Bulletins Nos. 28, 29 and 30, the content of which was noted.

RESOLVED: "That the content of the Bulletins be noted."

20 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: "That the next meeting of the Committee be held on Thursday 30 November at 4.00pm."

The meeting terminated at 5.26pm.