

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 25 January 2007 at 4.00pm.

PRESENT:

Councillor C Carr, M Dulieu (Parish Council Representative), Mr D Fisher (Independent Member), Mr M Graham (Independent Member), Councillor W Laverick and Miss V McEwan (Independent Member).

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

Prior to commencement of the meeting, the Monitoring Officer advised that due to the recent passing away of Reverend Davidson, Miss McEwan, in her capacity as Vice Chair, would take the Chair for the meeting.

The Committee proceeded to observe a one-minute silence as a mark of respect to the late Reverend Elliott Davidson.

30 URGENT BUSINESS

Immediately prior to commencement of the meeting, the Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that there was now a need to appoint a Chairman.

In view of this, the Monitoring Officer invited nominees for Chairman.

Miss McEwan was nominated, seconded and appointed as Chairman and proceeded to Chair the meeting.

Miss McEwan went on to invite nominees for Vice Chairman.

Mr Graham was nominated, seconded and appointed as Vice Chairman of the Committee.

31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Mrs G Stephenson and Councillor Westrip.

32 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 7 DECEMBER 2006

RESOLVED: "That the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held 7 December 2006, copies of which had previously been circulated to each Member, be confirmed as being a correct record."

33 MATTERS ARISING

Mr Graham referred to the Minutes of the previous meeting and queried why there was no mention of his report regarding the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees being discussed.

The Monitoring Officer advised that his report was not received in time to be added to the agenda for that particular meeting and apologised for its omission from the agenda for the current meeting.

The Chair suggested that it be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

RESOLVED: "That "Feedback from the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees" be added to the agenda for the next meeting."

34 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

35 DECISION TRACKER

The Monitoring Officer advised Members on the progress made on each item on the Decision Tracker.

In relation to the Standards Committee information leaflet produced by a council in Cornwall, the Monitoring Officer advised that the Democratic Services Assistant had contacted a number of local authorities in that area in an attempt to obtain a copy of the leaflet but that she had not yet managed to locate it.

The Chair suggested that a Standards Committee page on the Council's website be developed as a way of communicating with the community.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the Democratic Services Assistant would be able to set up a mock page for the Committee.

Mr Fisher queried if the recommendations in the report for the term of office for Independent Members had been agreed by the Council.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the report was submitted to the Council in December and the recommendations had been agreed.

RESOLVED: "That the contents of the decision tracker and comments made be noted."

36 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Chair referred to the Draft Annual Report, which had been being considered over a number of months and advised that she had spoken to the

Monitoring Officer in relation to this matter and had decided to merge the current Annual Report with the next one.

Discussion ensued with regard to the proposed content and style of the report.

The Chair suggested that the report should be approximately four pages long and asked if Members could have electronic copies of the report, on which the Members could make comments and/or amendments and these could then be forwarded to both the Chair and the Monitoring Officer in advance of the next meeting.

Mr Graham suggested that the Members hold a separate meeting to discuss the content of the draft report.

The Chair stated that she did not feel there was a need to have a separate meeting as the report reflects the activity of the Committee over the past year and should not be a problem to produce, however the style of the report needed to be agreed. She suggested that, in doing so, it would be useful to look at the style of annual reports of other Standards Committees. She requested that the report be completed for the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted and

- a) the draft report be circulated electronically to Members
- b) Members examine the style of reports of other Standards Committees
- c) comments and/or amendments to the report be forwarded to the Monitoring Officer and the Chair, and
- d) the report be completed before the next meeting of the Committee."

37 ARTICLE FOR DISTRICT NEWS

The Chair advised that she had submitted an article to the Communications and Public Relations Officer and that it would be in the next issue of District News.

RESOLVED: That the comments made be noted."

38 WORK SCHEDULE OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2007/2008

The Monitoring Officer referred to the Work Programme circulated at the previous meeting and advised there was a need to be proactive in training for Members. He advised there was an urgent need to hold a mock hearing.

The Chair stated that in the short term, the work programme should be focussed on mock hearing training.

Mr Fisher queried if there were any hearings being held locally which Members could attend.

The Monitoring Officer advised he would look into this matter and report back to the Committee.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted and the Monitoring Officer report back to the next meeting regarding hearing being held locally."

39 MOCK HEARING

The Chair queried if any progress had been made in relation to setting up a mock hearing.

The Monitoring Officer advised that at present he had not made any arrangements to hold a mock hearing. He requested that Members advise him of their availability during March and April in order for him to arrange dates for both a mock hearing and a local hearing well in advance.

RESOLVED: "That the comments made be noted and Members forward their availability during March and April to the Monitoring Officer."

40 BULLETIN No. 31

The Chair referred to Bulletin No. 31 and asked the Committee for any comments on the content.

Mr Fisher referred to page 8 and commented that it made very interesting reading.

RESOLVED: "That the content of Bulletin No 31 be noted."

41 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Graham requested that an item be discussed under "Any Other Business".

The Monitoring Officer advised that under the legislation contained in the Local Government Act 1972, unless an item was on the agenda, it could not be considered unless the Chair considered it an urgent item.

Mr Graham went on to advise that he would like the Chief Executive to be present at the next meeting when the report from the Annual Assembly was considered.

The Monitoring Officer advised that he was happy to convey this request to the Chief Executive.

42 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: "That the next meeting of the Committee be held on Thursday 22 March 2007 at 4.00pm."

The meeting terminated at 5.24pm.