

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Thursday,
7 April 2005

Time: 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor J. Wayman J.P. (Chairman) and
Councillors Mrs. B. Graham, A. Gray, Mrs. L. Hovvels.

Spennymoor Town Council
Councillor J.Marr

Independent Member
Mr. I. Jamieson

Apologies: Councillors G.M.R. Howe and Mr. L. Peterson

ST.26/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

ST.27/04 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10th February, 2005 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ST.28/04 STANDARDS TRAINING UPDATE

24th February and 8th April 2005

The Council's Monitoring Officer explained that the training held on 24th February 2005 had taken place and had been positively received. It would be repeated on 8th April 2005 for any Members who had not been able to attend the previous date.

Details were given as to what had been and would be covered in the training, including consideration of the new guidance issued to Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees on Local Investigations, Guidance for Members for Lobby Groups, Dual Hatted Members and the Code of Conduct and the new/proposed Planning Code of Good Practice.

Members questioned whether invitations to attend training were extended to Town and Parish Councils. It was explained that invitations had been distributed to all Town and Parish clerks together with the suggestion that the Councils Monitoring Officer hold the presentation at their offices.

26th May, 2005

Members were reminded that three tickets had previously been obtained for the event, which the Monitoring Officer was later informed would be the maximum amount offered to Local Authorities, however as Members had

expressed so much interest the Monitoring Officer had requested a further three tickets.

The Monitoring Officer would confirm attendance with individual Members nearer to the date.

5th and 6th September, 2005

The Committee was informed that the Monitoring Officer and Leader of the Council would attend the event.

ST.29/04

REVIEW OF STANDARDS ARRANGEMENTS- STAFFING SUPPORT FOR THE COUNCIL'S MONITORING OFFICER : CHANGES TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE : CHANGES TO CONSTITUTION

Consideration was given to a report of the Council's Monitoring Officer, detailing specific changes to the Constitution, to ensure that the Council is both able and capable of meeting the demands and requirements which the Council may face following the introduction in November 2004, of the regulations to provide for local investigation by Monitoring Officers of Member misconduct. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Specific reference was made to the proposed staffing implications regarding support for the Monitoring Officer, together with the appointment of a dedicated officer to support the Standards Committee itself. It was explained that as the Council's Monitoring Officer would become increasingly involved in advising Members, as well as being the clerk for Standards Committee, conflicts of interests could arise with the up and coming changes. The appointment of a Deputy Monitoring Officer would therefore help in reducing the workload and ease the possibility of conflicts of interests arising.

It also considered the introduction of a Sub-Committee for the Standards Committee to undertake the additional responsibilities and ease the burden of conflicts of interest.

Members sought advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer regarding dual-hatted Members and where advised of best practice procedures in dealing with conflicts of interest arising.

RECOMMENDED :

1. That the report be agreed.

2. That further reports be submitted to Cabinet and Council.

ST.30/04

STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND : A CODE FOR THE FUTURE: REVIEW/CONSULTATION

Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, which had been prepared to invite comments from Management Team, Cabinet, Standards Committee and Council during the consultation period of reviewing the Code of Conduct. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Specific reference was made to the key questions that had been issued by the Standards Board to prompt comments on the effectiveness of the current Code of Conduct.

It was explained that the Chief Executive Officer, Director of Resources and the Solicitor to the Council had prepared a corporate response to the questions and would be submitting them to the Standards Board, (for copy see file of Minutes). Members were informed that the Standards Board welcomed responses from anyone with an interest in the Code of Conduct within local authorities and were invited to submit personal responses to them directly.

Once the consultation period had been passed the Standards Board would prepare a number of recommendations to put forward to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

It was noted that the Monitoring Officer would submit a further report to Council on the 22nd April, 2005.

RECOMMENDED : That the report be agreed.

ST.31/04

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was explained that a future date would be confirmed at Annual Council on 20th May, 2005.

Members questioned whether the time of the meeting could be moved forward an hour earlier to 1.00 p.m. It was explained that with the agreement of the Chairman the meetings could be held at that time.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Miss. Sarah Billingham, Spennymoor 816166, Ext 4240