

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Thursday,
6 July 2006

Time: 1.00 p.m.

Present: L. Petterson (Chairman) and

Councillors A. Gray, Mrs. L. Hovvels, Mrs. C. Sproat and J. Wayman J.P.

Parish/Town Council Member

Councillor J. Marr – Spennymoor Town Council Member

Apologies: Councillor Mrs. B. Graham
Mr. I Jamieson (Independent Member)

ST.1/06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Members had no interests to declare.

ST.2/06 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 5th May 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ST.3/06 COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE: ANNUAL REPORT 2005
Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer giving a summary of the Annual Report 2005, which was published by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members were reminded of the background to the Committee on Standards in Public Life and given information on its activities since it was established in 2005.

The report gave details of the Committee's post-election consultation exercise, which was carried out between May and September 2005, the Eleventh Inquiry: Review of the Electoral Commission, the Research into Public Attitudes towards standards of conduct in public life, which was a long term project first initiated in 2001. It included presentations that the Committee had received, the involvement of the Audit Commission, the Statistics Commission and the House of Lords Appointments Commission.

It also outlined the Standards Issues: The operation of the Ministerial Code, which ensured that investigations of complaints were carried out correctly, Changes to Law on Special Advisers, The Review of the MP's Code of Conduct, the Trust in Government Statistics, the Draft Civil Service Bill, the Rules of Civil Servants leaving Crown Service to take up

business appointments, details of Electoral Propriety and their thoughts on the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

Members welcomed the report, however questioned the training provision for Town and Parish Clerks and Members. The Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer informed members that all Clerks/Members were invited to all training events and received all information that was circulated. Members were also informed of a Parish Toolkit that had recently been circulated to all Clerks whose responsibility was then to circulate it to the Members. It was pointed out that a number of Members had not received the toolkit therefore it was agreed that it be circulated again.

AGREED: That the report and future changes be noted.

ST.4/06

PROCEDURE FOR GRANTING DISPENSATIONS

Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer outlining the procedure and regulations relating to the granting of dispensations. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The report detailed the circumstances in which dispensations could be granted, when they should not be granted, the procedure for granting a dispensation and how a Member should apply for a dispensation. It also outlined the guidance from the Standards Board on how a Standards Committee could decide upon dispensation requests, how a general dispensation should be granted and how to keep records of dispensations.

Members of the Committee welcomed the report and suggested that it be tabled at the Borough/Parish Relations Working Party at the end of July. It was also suggested that the document be circulated to all Town and Parish Clerks.

AGREED:

- 1. That the report and the procedure and regulations outlined therein be noted.*
- 2. That the Borough, Parish and Town Councillors be informed of the arrangements.*

ST.5/06

STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN 2006/2007

Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer outlining a number of areas that would be considered at future Standards Committees. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members were referred to Appendix 1, which outlined the forthcoming meetings, the items that would be considered and how they related to the Standards remit.

Members were informed that the report was similar to the Work Programme that was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committees and would be constantly reviewed.

AGREED: That the report and the Forward Plan outlined therein be approved.

ST.6/06

ARRANGEMENTS FOR REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive, which detailed the need to continually review the Constitution to ensure that it reflected existing law and its operation continued to provide an efficient and effective framework and the delivery of the Council's aims and objectives. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The report informed Members of the proposed changes to the Constitution regarding: -

- The operation of the Appeals/Review Panels to improve organisational and meeting arrangements
- Modifications to the officer delegations at Part 3C: Officer Delegations, made at the request of relevant officers.

RECOMMENDED:

1. *That the Constitution be amended accordingly.*
2. *That the amended version be published on the Council's website.*

ST.7/06

STANDARDS TRAINING EVENT: 4TH APRIL 2006: EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE FEEDBACK

Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, which analysed the evaluation questionnaire responses from the training event held on Tuesday 4th April 2006 at Ferryhill Leisure Centre regarding standards issues presented by Peter Keith Lucas. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members pointed out that the event had been a huge success. It was also suggested that the event be held annually, either at a time when major changes were known to be taking place or at a similar point in the year as the above.

AGREED:

1. *That the report be noted.*
2. *That similar training events be arranged on an annual basis.*

ST.8/06

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

2nd November 2006 at 1.00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Spennymoor.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Miss S. Billingham, Tel 01388 816166 Ext 4240, sbillingham@sedgefield.gov.uk