

# Item 2

## SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Council Chamber,  
Council Offices,  
Spennymoor

Thursday,  
8 February 2007

Time: 1.00 p.m.

**Present:** Councillor A. Gray (Chairman pro temp) and  
Councillors Mrs. B. Graham and Mrs. C. Sproat

**Spennymoor Town Council member**  
Councillor J. Marr

**Independent Member**  
Mr. I. Jamieson

**Invited to attend** Councillor K. Noble

**Apologies:** Councillors Mrs. L. Hovvels, L. Petterson and J. Wayman J.P

**ST.17/06      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
Members had no interests to declare.

**ST.18/06      MINUTES**  
The Minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**ST.19/06      REVIEW OF CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICY**  
Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive detailing the findings of the review of the Council's Confidential Reporting Policy. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members were informed of the Policy's current position, the procedure to follow in using the Policy together with the results of the review of the use of the current policy.

Discussion was held as to who was consulted during the review of the policy and whether all staff were involved. It was explained that senior officers within the Service Improvement section were involved in the review. It was suggested that as the policy applied to all employees it would be beneficial to include them within the review.

**AGREED:**            *1. That the findings of the Review of the Confidential Reporting Policy outlined in paragraphs 3.10 and 3.12 be approved.*

*2. To note that since the last review of the confidential Reporting Policy on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2006 there have been no cases raised under the policy.*

*3. That employees are consulted during the Review of the Confidential Reporting Policy.*

**ST.20/06**

**STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND: LEADER'S ETHICAL PLAN 2007-08**

Consideration was given to a report of the Leader of the Council detailing the Leader's mission and objectives for the Council, in terms of policy and approach to issues of member ethics, standards and conduct. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The report informed Members of the challenges ahead of the Council, the mission and objectives for the future, the ethical mission statement, a review of the performance for 2006-2007, together with the guidance and support issued to all Borough Members and Town and Parish Councillors.

It also included the actions and measures of when the Committee meets and what is covered, the provision of authoritative guidance and support via training events, the current partnership arrangements, what new initiatives would be implemented and the work carried out by the Committee when monitoring the Constitution.

*Agreed: That Standards Committee notes the report.*

**ST.21/06**

**MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT: STANDARDS ATTENDANCE REVIEW 2006**

Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer detailing Members attendance figures at standards training events during 2006. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that as from the beginning of 2006 it was deemed necessary for all Members to attend at least one qualifying training event a year, with figures reported to the first Standards Committee of each year.

It was explained that those Members who had not attended any event would be notified in writing and requested to attend a meeting to discuss training requirements.

It was also pointed out that the statistics would be forwarded to the Organisational Development Officer.

*Agreed: That the report and the mandatory requirements for all Members be noted.*

**ST.22/06**

**STRONG AND PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES: THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER - IMPLICATIONS FOR STANDARDS AND ETHICS**

Consideration was given to report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer focusing on the implications for standards and ethics introduced by the Local Government White Paper – “Strong and Prosperous Communities.” (For copy see file of Minutes).

The Committee was informed of the role of Councillors as Democratic Champions and how the conduct regime could be localised and simplified to continue to observe high standards of conduct.

*Agreed: That Standards Committee notes the report and any future changes.*

**ST.23/06**

**STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND CONFERENCE: LOCAL INVESTIGATIONS AND APPEALS FROM LOCAL DECISIONS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer summarising the changing role of the Standards Board, local investigations and appeals from local decisions. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that the Standards Board now focused less on conducting its own investigations and more on supporting and advising local authorities, based on the principal that local people should make local decisions on local issues.

*Agreed: That Standards Committee notes the report and future changes.*

**ST.24/06**

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT TRENDS IN ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT AT NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL**

Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer analysing the current trends in allegations of misconduct submitted to the Standards Board relating to misconduct by elected, co-opted and independent members of local authorities. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was pointed out that the report considered both National and Local Trends, with the National Trends being broken down into consideration of the following: -

- Number of Allegations
- Source of Allegations
- Type of Authority (Investigations)
- Nature of Investigations
- Final Findings
- Local Investigation Statistics

Members attention was drawn to the 10 complaints that had been submitted to the Standards Board at a local level.

- Agreed:*
- 1. That the general trends in complaints of misconduct investigated at a national and local level be noted.*
  - 2. That Standards Committee notes the report and that further similar reports are made annually.*

**ST.25/06**

**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).

Members attention was drawn to the proposed changes to the Constitution outlined in the report.

- Recommended:*
- 1. That the Constitution be amended accordingly and make all necessary consequential amendments.*
  - 2. That the amended version be published on the Council's website.*

**ST.26/06**

**STANDARDS TRAINING EVENTS: 28TH SEPTEMBER, 9TH OCTOBER AND 23RD OCTOBER 2006: EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE FEEDBACK**

Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer analysing the responses from the training events on standards issues held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2006 in the Council Chamber, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2006 at Great Aycliffe Town Council and on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2006 at Sedgefield Town Council. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was pointed out that although the events were specifically aimed at Members a number of Town Clerks had also attended. The events were very well attended and the results were very positive.

- Agreed:*
- 1. That Standard Committee notes the report*
  - 2. That similar training events be arranged on an annual basis.*

**ST.27/06**

**REVISED MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer providing an explanatory commentary on the new proposals issued by the Government on the new model Code of Conduct for Members. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The proposals included changes to the following: -

- Unlawful discrimination
- Bullying
- Disclosure of Confidential Information
- Behaviour Outside Official Duties

- Using or Seeking to use Improper Influence
- Reporting Breaches of the Code and Proscribing Intimidation
- Gifts and Hospitality
- Interests of Family and Friends, and those with a Close Personal Association
- Definition of Personal Interests
- Disclosure of Personal Interests
- Public Service Interests
- Prejudicial Interests – List of Exemptions
- Sensitive Information

It was explained that the changes, if agreed, be implemented prior to the May 2007 elections, which would not leave a great deal of time.

*Agreed: That Standards Committee notes the report and future changes.*

**ST.28/06**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

5<sup>th</sup> April 2007 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

This page is intentionally left blank