

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Thursday,
1 November 2007

Time: 1.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor L. Petterson (Chairman) and
Councillors A. Gray, Mrs. L. Hovvels and Mrs. E. Maddison

Parish/Town Council Member
Councillor J. Marr

Apologies: Councillors T. Hogan and J. Wayman J.P
Mr. I. Jamieson (Independent Member)

ST.9/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Members had no interests to declare.

ST.10/07 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (For copy see file of Minutes).

ST.11/07 STANDARDS BOARD ANNUAL REVIEW 2006/2007
Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council regarding the above. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Specific reference was made to the national consensus that standards of conduct had improved since the Standards Board had been established. Local Authorities, Chief Executives, Political Leaders, Standards Committees and Monitoring Officers had embraced their role as champions of high standards.

Members were informed that 3,549 allegations of misconduct had been received by the Standards Board in 2006-07, 62% of which were from members of the public. 19% of the complaints had been referred for investigation.

It was reported that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, expected to receive Royal Assent in the next few weeks, and would make standards a "truly local" issue. Standards Committees would be given responsibility for receiving complaints and deciding on which were to be investigated.

Members were informed of the "positive picture" that had emerged from research studies into attitudes towards Standards.

Reference was made to the importance of good governance at all levels if the devolution of the system for upholding standards was to be completely successful. More work would be done on the system in the new year.

AGREED : That the report be noted.

ST.12/07

STANDARDS TRAINING EVENT: WEDNESDAY 27TH JUNE 2007: EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE FEEDBACK

Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer concerning the questionnaire responses from the training event on standards issues. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was reported that out of the 60 delegates who took part in the training event, 42 had completed the evaluation questionnaire. The event had been described as "very interesting and informative" and had been well received by all of the authorities involved. However, Members were informed that as a result of Local Government Re-organisation the event on 27th June 2007 would probably be the last involving other authorities to be organised by Sedgefield Borough Council.

AGREED : That the report be noted.

ST.13/07

STANDARDS TRAINING EVENTS 29TH AUGUST, 5TH SEPTEMBER AND 26TH SEPTEMBER 2007: EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE FEEDBACK

Consideration was given to a report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer regarding evaluation of questionnaire responses. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Specific reference was made to the extremely positive response to the question of how satisfied delegates were that the objectives identified for the course had been met. 89% of the delegates thought that the objectives had been met to a "good", "very good" or "excellent" level.

Members were informed that attendance at the events was reasonable and that in-house Member training events would continue through Local Government Re-organisation. Revised Code of Conduct training would be held on 28th November between 10.00 a.m. and 12.p.m. Regulatory Committees and decision processes on 20th November between 2.00 p.m. and 4.00 p.m. and 29th November between 10.00 a.m. and 12.00 p.m.

AGREED : That the report be noted.

ST.14/07

SIXTH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY - STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND - 15TH - 16TH OCTOBER 2007 - BIRMINGHAM

It was reported that the above event had been attended by two members and by both the Monitoring Officer and Deputy. The conference had focused on the evolving role of the Standards Board as a result of changes in roles. In view of the transfer of responsibility for complaints to the Local Authority, the Board's role would be increasingly strategic. It would define the standards framework, monitor effectiveness, issue guidance and provide support. It would only deal with the most serious investigations.

Also, in view of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, the Standards Board would have the responsibility for the monitoring and auditing of Standards Committees.

Further reports would be delivered in the new year when the Bill is approved and ready for implementation.

A question was raised regarding the funding arrangements for Standards Committees in view of the new responsibilities. It was explained that no extra funding would be made available.

ST.15/07

THE CODE OF CONDUCT - THE CODE UNCOVERED

A 30-minute DVD presentation was given concerning the Revised Code of Conduct, in which the new requirements were explained.

ST.16/07

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 7th February 2008 at 1.00 p.m.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Miss. J. Stubbs, Tel 01388 816166 Ext 4508, juliestubbs@sedgefield.gov.uk