

Meeting of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** of the Teesdale District
Council held at Teesdale House, Galgate, Barnard Castle on
TUESDAY 18 MARCH 2008 at 10:00 am

PRESENT:

District Council Representatives: *Cllrs DAR Forster, PM Chalrton, DH Reed, MWL Hamilton.*

Independent Members: *PDAustin (Vice-chair), J Hughes (Chair), TJ Lewis*

Parish Council Representatives
J Blissett

Apologies for absence:

There were no apologies received

Officers in Attendance: M Dennis (Chief Governance Officer - Monitoring Officer) and G Robinson (Democratic Services Officer)

19 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman announced that he had been asked by the Monitoring Officer to consider an urgent item of business in exempt session: Standards Board for England.

20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

On the advice of the Monitoring Officer, Councillor M Hamilton declared a prejudicial interest in the urgent item of Business (Minute 28); Standards Board for England.

21 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED:

That Mrs Dianne Austin be appointed as Vice Chair of this Committee.

22 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 19 December 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

23 LOCAL MANAGEMENT OF COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE CONDUCT OF LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS'

The report of the Monitoring Officer, submitted to Council on 27 February 2008, which gave information on the proposed implementation of the locally devolved regime for dealing with complaints made against local authority members, was circulated to members of the committee. The Monitoring Officer made a presentation which gave more information on the proposals and the likely procedures. The original date for implementation, 1 April, was now unlikely: 1 May was now the likely date. The initial assessment of allegations would then be carried out locally by the Standards Committee, meaning that, the role of the Standards Board for England would become more strategic, providing support to Councils and dealing with complaints which were considered to be not appropriate for local investigation. If a complaint went through the whole process of an initial assessment, possible review of the decision and a hearing; then nine members of the committee

would need to be involved. This brought into question the size of the committee and the number of members likely to be required to ensure that there were sufficient to deal with all stages of the process. There were a number of outstanding issues which the regulations needed to address, once they were published. Members considered the need to enlist more Parish Council members: It was recommended that there needed to be three. In this regard a nomination had been received in respect of Councillor Rosemary Thompson (Cootherstone Parish Council) for the existing vacancy; it was also noted that Cockfield Parish Council was also likely to be submitting a nomination.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the imminent implementation of the local management of complaints against members be noted.

(2) That the appointment of Cllr Rosemary Thompson (Cootherstone Parish Council) as a Parish Council member of the Standards Committee be recommended for approval to the next meeting of Full Council.

(3) That Council be recommended to increase the size of the Standards Committee by the addition of a third Parish Council representative.

(4) That, subject to approval of recommendation (3) above, the Monitoring Officer be authorised to process the application, if received, in respect of the prospective member of Cockfield Parish Council.

24 CODE OF CONDUCT: EXTRACTS FROM STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND CASE REVIEW 2007

Copies of this document were circulated to the members for information. Discussion on the case review will take place at the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

25 STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND BULLETIN 37, FEBRUARY 2008.

The Monitoring Officer circulated the latest Standards Board for England bulletin and highlighted parts of the bulletin that members would find of particular interest. The bulletin focused on the implementation of the changes in the local framework. The implementation date of 1 April 2008 has now been put back to 1 May 2008.

Publicising the Local Assessment of complaints

The importance of publicising the local assessment of complaints was addressed and examples of good practice were listed in the bulletin.

Independent members and parish representatives in the local framework

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 requirement that all Standards Committees have an Independent Chair was now in force. Teesdale District Council have had an Independent Chair since September 2006 and, earlier in the meeting, appointed a Independent Vice – Chair.

New reporting system for authorities on local assessment

The introduction of local assessment means that local authorities will be required to report information about receiving and investigating cases to the Standards Board for England. There will be a questionnaire to complete on line at the end of each quarter. The idea behind collecting the information is to allow the Standards Board to help local authorities by being aware of and sharing effective practice, identifying trends and managing risks.

26 DATES OF MEETINGS FOR 2008/09

Wednesday 11 June 2008 at 2.00pm

Wednesday 24 September 2008 at 2.00pm

Wednesday 3 December 2008 at 2.00pm

Wednesday 11 March 2009 at 2.00pm

27 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

'That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, minute 28, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as detailed in paragraph 3 of part 1,2 Schedule 12A of the said Act.'

28 STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND

The Monitoring Officer raised a matter relating to the Standards Board for England. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would proceed as now proposed

Councillor M Hamilton left the meeting during the consideration of the above item.

The meeting closed at 11.20am

GR/MD

CHAIRMAN