

Minutes of the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held in The Old Court Room The Council House Chichester City Council North Street Chichester West Sussex on Monday 29 June 2009 at 15:00

Members (9 and one vacancy)

Chichester District Council Members (3)

Mr A G F Moss (also a member of Fishbourne Parish Council)
Mr D J Myers (also a member of Bosham Parish Council)

Parish Council Members (3)

Mr J Cottam (Fernhurst Parish Council)
Mr C Heasman (Donnington Parish Council)
Mr D Ribbens (Plaistow and Ifold Parish Council)

Independent Members (3 and one vacancy)

Mr C Evans (Chairman)
Mr A Ryan (Vice-Chairman)
Mr C Wood

were present (8)

Apologies for Absence

Mr R H Field (Chichester District Council Member)

Officers Present

Mr M J Sully – Principal Solicitor
Mr G Thrussell – Senior Member Services Officer

54 Election of Chairman

Mr Evans was proposed by Mr Moss and seconded by Mr Myers to be the Chairman. There were no other nominations.

RESOLVED

That Mr Evans be elected as the Chairman of the Standards Committee for 2009-2010.

55 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Mr Ryan was proposed by Mr Evans and seconded by Mr Myers to be the Vice-Chairman. There were no other nominations.

RESOLVED

That Mr Ryan be appointed as the Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee for 2009-2010.

56 Chairman's Remarks

Mr Evans referred to the retirement from the Standards Committee of Mrs S Fay (Bepton Parish Council) and Mr C Hodgetts (Independent) after several years service. Members supported his proposal that he write to them in appreciation of their contribution.

Mr Evans welcomed Mr Cottam to his first meeting as the parish council member who had replaced Mrs Fay.

57 Minutes

There were no amendments to the minutes for the meeting held on Tuesday 16 December 2008.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 16 December 2008 be approved and that the Chairman sign and date them as a correct record.

58 Urgent Items

There were no urgent items for consideration at the meeting.

59 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interests made at this meeting.

60 Public Question Time

No public questions had been submitted.

61 Minutes of the Meeting of the Assessment Sub-Committee on Wednesday 4 February 2009

Mr Wood, who had chaired this Assessment Sub-Committee meeting, commented on the process for the benefit particularly of members who had yet to sit on a Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Assessment Sub-Committee held on Wednesday 4 February 2009 be received.

62 Re-establishment of the Sub-Committees

The Committee considered the report circulated with the agenda (copy attached to the official minutes), which was presented by Mr Sully.

It was noted that from July 2009 the Standards Board for England would be using an abbreviated version of its title namely Standards for England and, if necessary, the Sub-

Committee's terms of reference would be amended in due course to reflect that name change.

RESOLVED

That the Assessment Sub-Committee, Review Sub-Committee, Report Sub-Committee and Hearing Sub-Committee be re-established for the Council Year 2009-2010 to deal with complaints of alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct and that the membership, terms of reference and quorum of each Sub-Committee as set out in Appendices 1 to 4 to the report be approved.

63 Annual Return May 2009 to Standards Board for England

The Committee considered the annual return circulated with the agenda (copy attached to the official minutes), which was introduced by Mr Sully.

With reference to the current national mood over MPs' expenses, Mr Wood drew attention to section 8 in the Annual Return (Registering member interests) and requested that the District Solicitor report to the Committee in due course explaining the basis on which the members' register of interests and the register of gifts and hospitality were not published on the Council's website.

The point was briefly discussed. Mr Moss supported the publication on the website or at least a notice informing the public where the registers could be viewed. He also felt it was advisable to disseminate in Council publications and on the website details of how the public could make a complaint against a member. Mr Myers advocated instead the practice of Bosham Parish Council whereby the register of members' interests was on public display during each parish council meeting.

It was agreed that the District Solicitor should report to the Committee on the issues of website access to the registers of both members' interests and gifts and hospitality (with reference to the practice of other local authorities within West Sussex) and also the publication of the register of parish council members' interests on the Council's website.

The Committee had no comments on the remainder of the Annual Return.

RESOLVED

That the Annual Return May 2009 to the Standards Board for England be noted and the District Solicitor report to the Standards Committee on the issue of publishing on Chichester District Council's website (a) the register of Chichester District Council members' interests and the register of gifts and hospitality and (b) the register of parish council members' interests.

64 Standards Committees – New Regulations

The Committee considered the report circulated with the agenda (copy attached to the official minutes), which was introduced by Mr Sully. He elaborated on the main provisions set out in the report by referring to the summary of the Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Order 2009 SI 1255 in Bulletin issue 44 published by the Standards Board for England. He said that no statutory guidance was currently available.

RESOLVED

That the summary in the report of the Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Order 2009 SI 1255 be noted.

65 Late Items

As recorded in minute 58, there were no late items for consideration by the Committee.

66 Retirement of the District Solicitor

Mr Sully advised that Mr M J Kelley (District Solicitor) was due to retire in August 2009. Members requested that their good wishes be conveyed to Mr Kelley and their gratitude to him for all his hard work and sound advice over the years.

67 Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED

That in accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (the Act) the public and the press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item on the agenda for the reason that it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted that there would be disclosure to the public of "exempt information" being information of the nature described in Paragraph 1 (information relating to any individual) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

68 Code of Conduct - Complaints in Chichester District

The Committee considered the confidential report circulated to members and officers.

Mr Sully and Mr Evans commented briefly on the complaints summarised in para 3.2.

A request by Mr Ribbens was noted that the name of the parish council involved be disclosed to assist members in deciding whether they needed to declare an interest.

The Committee was advised that one or two further cases were likely to be considered by the Assessment Sub-Committee in or about mid-July 2009.

RESOLVED

That the complaints which have been received since May 2008 under the Local Determination Procedures be noted.

[Note The meeting ended at 15:39]

CHAIRMAN

Date _____