

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee
held on Tuesday, 7th October, 2008 at Westfields, Middlewich Road,
Sandbach

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs L Smetham (Chairman)

Councillors Mrs R Bailey, B Dykes, J Goddard, J Hammond, Mrs M Hollins
and M Parsons

9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

11 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present who wished to address the
Committee.

12 MINUTES OF MEETING TUESDAY, 8TH JULY, 2008 OF STANDARDS

RESOLVED

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

13 RECRUITMENT PROCESS FOR INDEPENDENT AND PARISH COUNCIL STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Consideration was given to a report updating the Committee on the
ongoing recruitment process for Independent and Parish Council
representatives.

The recruitment process for Independent and Parish Council members
was considered by the Committee on 8 July 2008. It was resolved that
approval be given to recruit Independent Members from the existing pool
of Borough and County Council independent members and that a panel of
members of the Committee be appointed to interview and recommend the
appointment of Independent Members to the Committee. It was also
agreed that the Cheshire Association of Local Councils be approached to
conduct a nomination process for the recruitment of Parish Council
representatives with one nomination coming from each of the three
districts.

The Panel had met to consider applications which had been sought and received from seven of the existing Independent Members and to interview each of the candidates. The Panel decided to recommend that the five applicants be appointed as independent members of the Standards Committee, details of which were set out in the report.

The Panel also decided to recommend that “a reserve list of Independent members be created in case of future vacancies on the Standards Committee and that the remaining two applicants be placed on the reserve list, details of which were set out in the report

It was noted that the Committee needed to recruit 3 Parish Councillors to act as members of the Committee. At its previous meeting, the Committee had agreed that the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC) would be approached to assist in the recruitment process. As part of a joint process with Cheshire West and Chester Council, an approach had been made to the Cheshire Association, which has agreed to assist in the recruitment process.

In considering the report Members expressed concern that all Parish Councillors should have the opportunity to respond and there might be some difficulties with regard to informing them, as some Parish Council meetings had already taken place. It was understood that Parish Councillors would be contacted individually, rather than through the Parish Clerks, However, this would be clarified with ChALC.

RESOLVED

1. That the progress with regard to the process for selection of Independent Members be noted and that a recommendation be made to full Council on 20 October that the applicants set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report be appointed to the five Independent Member places and the applicants set out in 4.3 of this report be noted on a reserve list in case of future vacancies amongst the five Independent Member places.
2. That the proposed timetable for appointment of Parish Council members be approved and that the Committee agree to reconsider this matter at it's next meeting, providing that all Members have had the opportunity to respond.

14 PROPOSED TRAINING PROGRAMME

At its previous meeting, the Committee had been advised that the full Standards Committee would require training and awareness, which would need to commence once the Independent and Parish members had been appointed.

Consideration was given to a proposed Training Plan.

It was suggested that, initially, training should take place on two occasions: -

- **January 2009 – Prior to the first meeting of the full Committee on 13 January.** It was proposed that an induction session be held. Depending on the areas to be covered this would be for 1.5 hours. The aim of this session would be to introduce members of the Committee to each other.
- **February 2009 (Date to be agreed)** – A full day session to provide detailed training on dealing with complaints and would cover the assessment process, local hearings and reviews. This training would be vital for the Committee to fulfil its role. A proposed draft programme was included within the report to the Committee.

It was noted that there was a place available for a member of the Committee to attend the Standards Board Annual Conference and that Councillor Goddard had agreed to attend.

RESOLVED

That the proposed Training Programme and dates for the two events be endorsed.

15 CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Committee was requested to note the work that the Governance and Constitution Committee was undertaking to develop a Code of Corporate Governance and to consider the elements of the Code which were most relevant to the Standards Committee and its functions, so that views could be fed back to the Governance and Constitution Committee.

Whilst a Code of Corporate Governance was not strictly a legal requirement, having one in place which met Audit Commission requirements was considered best practice, as the Annual Governance Statement was required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations and a Code of Corporate Governance simplified the production of the Annual Governance Statement, as all the expected core principles in the CIPFA/SOLACE framework should be present in the local Code. Therefore, evidencing compliance with the local Code would also provide significant evidence to support the Annual Governance Statement.

Members of the Committee requested that a further detailed report be submitted to the next meeting, to assist them in their consideration of this matter.

RESOLVED

That a further report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

16 STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND - BULLETIN 40

Consideration was given to the latest bulletin published by the Standards Board for England.

RESOLVED

That the bulletin be noted.

17 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the draft Work Programme.

RESOLVED

That the following changes be made to the Work Programme:-

November

Next meeting – Tuesday 25 November, 10am

Items :-

Recruitment of Parish Representatives

Consider the website presence

Reports on Parish Representative nominations, feedback on Conference

Review Councillor Code of Conduct Induction Sessions

Feedback from Standards Board Annual Conference

Whistleblowing Policy

January

Committee meeting to take place on Tuesday 13 January, with induction at 10am, followed by the meeting at 11am.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 10.40 am

Councillor Mrs L Smetham (Chairman)