
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne on Wednesday 28th February 2007 from 7:00 pm to 8:20 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Jackie Constable, Brenda Hammond and David Simmons.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Miss Davies and Mr Radford.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Messrs Long and Nunn (Independent Members).

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mike Cosgrove and Cindy Davis.

762 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Resolved:

(1) That Mr Long be elected Chairman for the Municipal Year.

763 **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

Resolved:

(1) That Councillor Brenda Hammond be elected as Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year.

764 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th June 2005 (Minute Nos. 53 - 57) and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 10th August 2005 (Minute No. 229) were taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as correct records.

765 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

PART A MINUTES FOR CONFIRMATION

766 **CONSULTATION ON AMENDMENTS TO THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

The Director of Corporate Services, Governance and Scrutiny, in his capacity as Monitoring Officer, submitted a report which required feedback on consultation on amendments to the Model Code of Conduct. He explained that his report set out explanations of each section of the consultation document; the questions asked and his suggestions on issues to be considered. The Committee worked, section by section, through the Director of Corporate Services, Governance and Scrutiny's report and Members were invited to add further comments. Additional comments were added as below:-

Unfair Discrimination

There was a general consensus from Swale Borough Council Members that most of the proposals were a sensible reflection of the situation.

Bullying

Although it was difficult to define bullying, it was important to have some form of

definition. Members suggested that the word 'specific' be taken out of the wording.

Disclosure of Confidential Information

Clarity was needed to ensure that a genuine public interest arose rather than disclosure being used for political gain. The intention was to get a dividing line between really serious issues and the potential for minor political point scoring. This was not easy to accomplish.

Behaviour outside official duties

Reference was made to the Livingstone judgement. It was considered important that Members should be allowed to enjoy a life outside official duties. Members agreed the importance of separating their duties between an official or personal capacity.

Using or seeking to use improper influence

The addition of 'or attempt to use' was welcomed and it was emphasised that clearer advice needed to come from the Standards Board.

Publicity Code

Confusion could occur in relation to publicity from one authority to another if there was no central framework.

Gifts and hospitality

It was questioned as to whether it was appropriate to require Members to register a personal interest when they received gifts or hospitality over £25. Members agreed that the status quo, under the current code, should be maintained.

Interests of family, friends and those with a close personal association

The definition of 'close personal association' was difficult to define.

Disclosure of personal interests

Guidance needed to be clear.

Sensitive information

This would safeguard Members and their families.

The Director of Corporate Services, Governance and Scrutiny concluded by stating that it was important to ensure that everything was properly defined within the Code of Conduct.

Recommended:

(1) That the Director of Corporate Services, Governance and Scrutiny responds to the consultation as set out in his report, subject to the additional comments made by the Standards Committee.

767 MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

The Director of Corporate Services, Governance and Scrutiny introduced his first annual report relating to his role as Monitoring Officer. He set out his role and what it entailed. He confirmed that he would report back to the Standards Committee with regard to maintaining the register of Members' interests and the Code of Conduct for Employees.

• DCSGS

Recommended:

(1) That the report be noted.

Chairman