

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ETHICS AND STANDARDS

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE, STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN

20TH DECEMBER 2005 (6PM)

PRESENT:

Independent Members:

Mrs A McDowell (Chairman), C J Brighton and Rev. J Cox.

Councillors:

P Dyke, Mrs P V Hayward, Mrs S M Hayward, C D Nicholls and J C Simmonds.

Parish Council Representative

Councillor R Hobson.

Observers:

There were no members present as observers.

ES.6 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

ES.7 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES

No substitutes were appointed.

ES.8 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made.

ES.9 MINUTES

DECISION:

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2005 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the addition of Councillor C D Nicholls' name to the list of these sending their apologies.

ES.10**PUBLICITY OF MEMBER ATTENDANCE AT COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The Monitoring Officer gave the Committee a verbal report on this item. She discussed the impact that the Local Government Act had on the roles of Members and their duties.

The Act had introduced Members' Allowances, paid in monthly lump sums to replace attendance allowances. This reflected a change of emphasis to recognise Councillors' ward work and other work outside committee meetings such as non-Cabinet Members' participation in scrutiny exercises, which involved more than just attendance at meetings. Guidance received from the Independent Remuneration Panel on Members' Allowances, encouraged the Council to be more transparent in publishing records of member attendance at committee meetings.

With the advent of Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) targets, Members noted that some Councils e.g. Tameside Borough Council and Manchester Borough Council published an annual report that gave details of Members' activities for the municipal year. This was a way of feeding back to the public what Members had achieved e.g. details of ward surgeries held, training and development undertaken, achievements, scrutiny work they had undertaken and committees they had sat on.

A lengthy discussion ensued on the merits of each member producing a Members' Annual report. Whilst some members of the Committee felt it unnecessary to publicise what they did, some of the independent Members believed that the Ethics and Standards Committee should be more pro-active in promoting transparency and accountability.

Members agreed that the Monitoring Officer would bring back a suggested template on which Members could submit an annual report and examples of other Councils Member Reports.

DECISION:

The Monitoring Officer to draft a template on which Members could submit an annual report for consideration at the Committee's next meeting and bring examples of other Councils Member Reports.

ES.11**EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC****DECISION:**

Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of "Exempt Information" as defined in paragraphs 4 of Part I

of Schedule 12A of the Act.

ES.12 SUMMARY OF MINUTES

The following proceedings were considered after the press and public had been excluded from the meeting. A summary of the minutes relating to these items have been made as “exempt information” would be disclosed if the minutes were published in full.

Complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman 2004/2005

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that detailed the outcome of complaints that had been referred to the Local Government Ombudsman. The Committee noted the contents of the report.

The meeting ended at 6.33 pm.,