

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

THE EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, CLENSMORE STREET,
KIDDERMINSTER

13TH AUGUST 2009 (6:00PM)

Present:

Councillors: Mrs H E Dyke, P Dyke, D R Godwin, Mrs S M Hayward,
K J Stokes, J Thomas, S J Williams.

Independent Members:

Rev J A Cox (Chairman), Mr J T Hipkiss and Mr R Reynolds.

Parish/Town Members:

Councillor R Hobson
Councillor Miss A Mace

Observers:

There were no members present as observers.

ES.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: M J Hart,
Mrs R L Lewis and C D Nicholls.

ES.2 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor S J Williams was appointed as a substitute for Councillor M J Hart.

ES.3 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

ES.4 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 27th January 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ES.5 Welcome to Mr R Reynolds

Mr R Reynolds, the newly appointed Independent Member was welcomed to his first meeting of the Committee by the Chairman.

ES.6 Standards Board Intervention Joint Standards Committees and Dispensations

A report was considered from the Monitoring Officer relating to the New Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Regulations 2009 (SI~2009/1255) which came into force from the 15th June 2009. This legislation made provision for the Standards Board for England to suspend the functions of a local Standards Committee where the Committee was failing to perform its functions satisfactorily and either to discharge the functions itself or to arrange for another authority's Standards Committee to discharge them. The regulations also gave authorities the power to establish Joint Standards Committees and to extend the power of Standards Committees to give Members dispensations where they would otherwise be prohibited from participating on a matter because of a prejudicial interest.

Members discussed the possibility of forming a joint standards committee and whilst they acknowledged the benefits of sharing it was perceived that at the present time we should continue to run our own Ethics and Standards Committee.

Decision: That the contents of the Monitoring Officer's report be agreed.

ES.7 Member Activity Reports

A report was considered from the Monitoring Officer that advised that one Member of the Council had not submitted a Member Activity Report to Annual Council for the municipal year 2008/09.

Members discussed possible sanctions that could be used and acknowledged that Council had agreed that these reports should be submitted on an annual basis in order to increase transparency.

Decision: The Member be invited to a meeting with the Monitoring Officer and the Chair of the Ethics and Standards Committee to explain why a member activity report had not been submitted. A copy of the letter to be sent to the Member's Group Leader.

ES.8 Work Programme

A report was considered from the Monitoring Officer which asked the committee to consider the use of a work programme to identify topics for future meetings of the Committee.

The Monitoring Officer informed Members that the Standards Board had suggested that it was good practice to have a Work Programme which was agreed by all Members.

A discussion ensued and the following items were put forward for the Work Programme:

- Confidentiality of Reports
- Public Speaking – the Do's and Don'ts

- Training
- Communication Strategy

Decision: A Work Programme be drawn up incorporating the items put forward by Members.

ES.9 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Decision: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of “exempt information” as defined in paragraph 1 of part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

ES.9 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 has been made as “exempt information” would be disclosed if the minutes were published in full.

ES.10 Update on Local Determination of Complaints

The Committee received a verbal update from the Monitoring Officer on the local determination of complaints.

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm.