

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

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

29TH MARCH 2010 (6:00 PM)

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**Present:**

**Independent Members:**

Rev J A Cox (Chairman), C A Noons (Vice-Chairman) and T J Hipkiss and R Reynolds.

**Councillors:** R L Akathiotis, H E Dyke, P Dyke, G H Eeles, P B Harrison, M J Hart, S M Hayward, C D Nicholls, K J Stokes and J Thomas.

**Town and Parish Members**

Councillor R Hobson

Councillor A Mace

Councillor J Swift

**Observer** Councillor M B Kelly.

**ES.32 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D R Godwin.

**ES.33 Appointment of Substitutes**

Councillor P B Harrison was a substitute for Councillor D R Godwin.

**ES.34 Declaration of Interests**

No declarations of interest were made.

**ES.35 Minutes**

**Decision:** The minutes of the meeting held on 27th January 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**ES.36 Outcomes of Recent Assessment Committee/Review Sub-Committee Meetings**

A report was considered from the Monitoring Officer that outlined the outcome of the recent Assessment Committee/Review Sub-Committee meetings.

The Monitoring Officer advised Members that it was the first time that the Council had convened a Review Sub-Committee meeting and it had gone well with a lot of relevant matters being raised and deliberated. The outcome of the Sub-Committees was that the complaint was outside the jurisdiction of the

Sub-Committees at the present time. However, it was noted that amendments were proposed by the Government to the Code of Conduct.

A discussion ensued about the need for Members to keep their Register of Interests up to date. A request was made that this be an agenda item for the next meeting of the Committee.

**Decision: That the decision of the recent Assessment Committee and Review Sub-Committee be noted that the complaint fell outside the jurisdiction of these committees and therefore no action could be taken on the allegations.**

**ES.37 The Use of ICT in Meetings**

A report was considered from the Monitoring Officer that updated Members on the further consultations that had taken place regarding the use of ICT in meetings.

The Monitoring Officer advised members that there had been considerable debate on the use of ICT in meetings. The Chief Executive had asked that the report be delayed a cycle in order to allow for further consultation. A Briefing Note had now been prepared which acknowledged the need to achieve targets for electronic working and reduce the amount of paper that was circulated.

Members had been concerned about those Members who used devices in regulatory meetings to read their emails and it was noted that the Council could be subject to legal challenge if a Member was perceived not to be giving an application their full attention. However, it was acknowledged that sometimes officers attended meetings where their input was likely to be very short and thus the proposals should allow them to work on electronic devices during the part of the meetings in which they were not involved.

A Member proposed that the recommendations in the report be approved with slight amendment to the wording as follows:

**Decision:**

- 1. Recommended to Council that the Council's constitution be amended to prohibit the making or receiving of calls at all public meetings and all phones to be turned to silent or off.**
- 2. The use of hand held devices, including texting or emailing or receiving texts or email is not permitted at public meetings.**

**ES.38 Annual Report to Council from Ethics and Standards Committee**

A report was considered from the Monitoring Officer that attached the proposed Annual Report to Council from the Ethics and Standards Committee.

The Monitoring Officer advised Members that the Chairman's name would be put to this report. One further amendment was proposed in the paragraph relating to the local assessment of complaints. The report would include the fact that during the year 3 complaints had been received and that two were

outside jurisdiction and the other complaint had been referred to the Monitoring Officer for 'Other Action.'

**Decision: That agreement be given to submit the Annual Report to the Annual Council meeting subject to the inclusion of the Chairman's name at the foot of the report and the fact that during the year 3 complaints had been received. Two of which were outside jurisdiction and the other complaint had been referred to the Monitoring officer for 'Other Action.'**

**ES.39 Update on Training**

Members had been advised at a previous meeting that training would be made available to them regarding the Code of Conduct. The Monitoring Officer advised that a session was planned for 11<sup>th</sup> May 2010 for new Members and a further refresher session would be made available in June 2010.

**Decision: The details of training sessions be noted.**

**ES.40 Thank You to Members Who Were Leaving**

The Chairman extended his thanks to those Members who would not be seeking re-election at the forthcoming election. It was noted that the following Members would not be standing:

Councillors R Akathiotis, S M Hayward, and A Mace.

The meeting ended at 6.20 pm.