



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 25 JANUARY 2006 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Mrs Caroline Roberts (Independent Member)

Councillor Coley
Councillor O'Brien

Councillor Mrs. Sood

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were requested to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

The Chair declared a non prejudicial interest in Item 6, 'Agenda Note: Recruitment of Second Independent Member'.

17. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2005, copies of which had been circulated to Members, be taken as read, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

18. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT IN ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE FUTURE

The Town Clerk submitted a report informing the Committee of the publication by the Government of the above discussion paper. It was noted that officers would go through the document in detail to highlight all the issues.

The Committee were keen that the legislation was progressed as quickly as possible. They also welcomed the proposed changes with regard to declaration of interests, the duty to report breaches and the application of the code to a Members' personal life. However, more detailed discussions would be held as each of the proposals was brought forward for consideration.

The Committee thanked the Town Clerk and the Service Director, (Democratic

Services) for all the work they had put in to the Standards Committee over the last 4 years.

RESOLVED:

that the Committee receive further detailed reports at future meetings, on each of the major proposals contained within the ODPM Discussion paper

19. GOING LOCAL: INVESTIGATIONS AND HEARINGS

The Town Clerk submitted a report suggesting a strategy for preparing for the conduct of Local Hearings.

RESOLVED:

that rather than hold a training session in isolation, officers prepare a tailored briefing, to be held ready for delivery at a point immediately prior to when a complaint is required to be determined by the Committee, as detailed in the report.

20. FUTURE MEMBER TRAINING IN ISSUES OF ETHICS AND PROBITY

The Town Clerk submitted a report seeking guidance on future Member training in issues of ethics and probity, with particular reference to induction and refresher training following the May 2007 City Council elections and in prospective candidate briefings.

It was considered that it would be helpful to include in the post election training on Interests, spending some time going through the register of interests form to help Members understand what the expectations were with regard to this.

With regard to 'pre-election' events, it was agreed it would be useful to have a Member of the Standards Committee involved and that issues of ethics and probity should be given a high profile at such events.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that ethics and probity issues be included in prospective candidate briefings and that there should be Standards Committee representation at such events
- (2) that there should be ethic and probity training (including refresher) for all Members elected to the Council in May 2007 and that this should be linked to the formal acceptance of office, and the training to include a run through on completing the register of interests form
- (3) that the current requirement for compulsory training for Members of Development Control Committee be extended to Members of the Licensing Committee and associated panels; and

- (4) that training for all Members be made available on declarations of interests and also on how to make an effective case when, for example, attending as Ward Members at Regulatory Committees.

21. AGENDA NOTE: STANDARDS COMMITTEE - RECRUITMENT OF SECOND INDEPENDENT MEMBER

The Town Clerk updated the Committee on proposals for filling the current vacancy for the second Independent Member on the Committee. It was noted that the Discussion Paper, "Standards of Conduct in English Local Government: The Future", addressed earlier in the meeting, pointed towards Independent Members on the Committee reflecting a balance of experience and therefore this would be reflected in the recruitment documentation.

However, in addition, Council at its meeting on 26 January 2006 was due to consider the future shape of Scrutiny within the Authority, including the role of the Audit Committee. Any possible changes to the Audit role performed by the Standards Committee, if pursued by Council, would also be reflected in the documentation.

A public advertisement would then be placed, with the ensuing recruitment to be conducted by the three political Group Whips, supported by the Town Clerk in his capacity as the Council's Monitoring Officer.

In the event the Council did not make a firm decision on the future of the Audit function, the Committee's guidance was sought as to whether any action should be taken to recruit to the vacancy pending a Council decision.

RESOLVED:

that the recruitment to the current Independent Member vacancy on the Committee be deferred pending the outcome of the Council decision on the portfolio of the Standards Committee.

22. COMPLAINTS AGAINST ELECTED MEMBERS

The Town Clerk submitted a report which outlined the number and type of complaints received against Elected Members.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

23. STANDARDS COMMITTEE NEWS: 04

The Town Clerk submitted for the Committee's information is a copy of Standards Committee [News:04](#) November 2005. The Committee was asked if it wished to receive this publication at the Committee or directly to Members.

RESOLVED:

that the Standards Committee News be sent directly to Members unless there was a meeting that coincided with its publication.

24. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair had agreed to accept an item of Urgent Business onto the agenda, 'Reconfiguration Of Scrutiny Committees'. The reason for urgency was to give the Committee the opportunity to comment on the proposals for integrating the audit function into the Standards Committee, which could then be fed to the Council Meeting the following day.

The Chair also agreed to consider an item raised with regard to Member behaviour at Council meetings. The reason for urgency was that the Council meeting was the next day.

25. RECONFIGURATION OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Town Clerk submitted a report, also to be considered by Council, regarding options for the reconfiguration of Scrutiny Committee. This had been requested at the Council meeting in September 2005, to take account of the current service integration review. The paper also included options for the delivery of the audit function, following advice from CIPFA and taking account of CPA input. The CIPFA advice was that the audit function should be carried out by a Council Committee and one of the proposals in the report was the inclusion of the audit committee functions into the Standards Committee. The Committee considered the proposals and noted that the inclusion of additional functions would impact on the workload of the Committee. It would potentially have financial implications in relation to Members Allowances, for example, if the triumvirate principle was adopted or the workload of the Independent Members increased significantly. The Committee also considered that the role and number of Members, including Independent Members, needed to be taken into account and the 'political' interface, given that the Standards Committee was chaired by a non- Councillor. Consideration would also need to be given to training issues for Members of an audit committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Council note that the Standards Committee would wish to be consulted on any further consideration, if any, of proposals for the audit function and in particular would want the issues outlined above to be taken into account in any consideration of how the audit committee function should be managed.

26. STANDARD OF MEMBER BEHAVIOUR AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Some concern was expressed by the Committee at the standards of conduct of some Members at Council meetings.

RESOLVED:

that the Lord Mayor be requested to report to the Council meeting that the Standards Committee have asked that Councillors be

reminded of and give attention to the agreed rules of conduct for Council meetings.

27. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 6.55pm

