



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Held: MONDAY, 23 JUNE 2003 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Ms Jill Bellingham (Independent Member) (Chair)

Mrs Caroline Roberts (Independent Member)
Councillor Coley

Councillor Getliffe
Councillor O'Brien

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they might have in the business to be discussed and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them. No such declarations were made at this time.

2. MEMBERSHIP 2003/2004

RESOLVED:

that the membership of the Committee for 2003/2004, as set out below, be noted: -

Councillors Coley, Getliffe and O'Brien
Ms. Jill Bellingham (Independent Member) (Co-Chair)
Mrs. Caroline Roberts (Independent Member) (Co-Chair)

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE 2003/2004

RESOLVED:

that the Terms of Reference of the Committee for 2003/2004 as attached to the agenda, be noted.

4. DATES OF MEETINGS 2003/2004

RESOLVED:

that the dates of meetings for the Committee in 2003/2004, as set out below, be approved: -

Wednesday 24 September 2003

Wednesday 19 November 2003
Wednesday 28 January 2004
Wednesday 24 March 2004.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Ms. Jill Bellingham informed Members that she had been both present and chaired the meeting of the Committee held on 29 January 2003.

RESOLVED:

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29 January 2003, as set out on pages 10 – 12 in the Minute Book, be received, taken as read and, subject to the inclusion of Ms. Jill Bellingham in the list of attendees and that she chaired the meeting, they be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

6. AGENDA NOTE: STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND - SECOND ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

Caroline Roberts (Independent Member), gave an oral report on her attendance at the Standards Board for England Second Annual Assembly of Standards Committees, held on 9-10 June 2003 at the International Convention Centre, Birmingham.

The Committee was given statistical information relating to the number of complaints rejected by the Standards Board for England and of the nature of the rejected cases, under the current regulations. It was anticipated by the Board, that of the total complaints referred to them under the new Regulations that were due to come into force on 30 June 2003 (Minute 9 refers), about 25% would be passed back to Monitoring Officers for determination by Standards Committees, although not expected to amount to more than two complaints per year per Committee on average. It was further reported that only those complaints received after the introduction of the new Regulations would be dealt with in this manner, i.e complaints held by the Board prior to the new Regulations being implemented would not be retrospective.

Caroline Roberts reported that she had volunteered to sit again on the Standards Board for England Steering Group to oversee the arrangements for the 2004 Annual Assembly

RESOLVED:

that the information reported be noted.

7. STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Town Clerk submitted a report of the work of the Standards Committee over the past year and sought the comments of the Committee with the view to endorsing a final version to present to Council, at it's meeting on 3 July 2003.

The Committee gave full consideration to the content of the report and suggested that it be expanded to cover the full period of time the Standards Committee had been operating. Reference to the original training programme and road shows should therefore also be included, together with mention of Caroline Roberts' attendance at the 2002 Standards Board Assembly. The Town Clerk suggested that, at the end of paragraph 3.2 of the report (Complaints against Members), reference should be made to the fact that Council supported the recommendations of the Standards Committee in the case of a series of complaints lodged against a Councillor, prior to the acceptance by Council of the New National Code.

RESOLVED:

that subject to the amendments outlined above, the Annual Report be endorsed for submission to Council at its meeting on 3 July 2003.

8. REVIEW OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Town Clerk submitted a report that reviewed progress on Member Training and Development relating to matters of ethical standards and probity.

The Town Clerk reminded members that they had last considered Training and Development at their meeting on 31 October 2002, when a forward programme of training for Members of the Standards Committee, Elected Members and officers of the Council had been agreed to ensure that matters of probity and standards of conduct were embedded within the organisation. Since that time, and in particular, arising out of the City Council elections held on 1 May 2003, much of the Member training and Development had been focussed on Members of the new Council.

It was further reported that the Forward Programme of training and development had yet to be completed but that further elements had been identified which included a probity/ethical standards element and included: -

Licensing – including the new legislative provisions relating to liquor licences, etc.

Public Speaking/Debating/Media Training

As a final point the Committee was informed that the recently introduced regular Members Information Bulletin was seen as a further vehicle through which members could be briefed and updated on specific issues of ethics and probity.

RESOLVED:

that the proposed continuing programme of training and development, as reported, be agreed and supported.

9. THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES (CODE OF CONDUCT) (LOCAL DETERMINATION) REGULATIONS 2003

The Town Clerk submitted an interim report that informed Members of the publication of the Local Authorities (Code of Conduct) (Local Determination) Regulations 2003, due to come into force on 30 June 2003.

It was reported that the provisions contained within the Regulations needed to be considered in greater detail and that a further report addressing the relevant issues would be brought back to the next meeting of this Committee.

Associated with the above Regulations, and also of relevance to the Standards Committee, were proposed amendments to the Local Government Act 2000, to be included in the Local Government Bill before Parliament. Members were informed that a Summary of Responses had been published to the consultation paper on Conduct of Councillors – Local Investigation and Determination of Misconduct of Councillors, and would form the basis of the proposed Regulations. A copy of the Summary was appended to the report.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the content of the Local Authorities (Code of Conduct) (Local Determination) Regulations 2003 be noted and that a further report on its implications and impact on the City Council, and notably the role and operation of the Standards Committee, be brought to the next meeting of the Committee; and,
- 2) that the contents of the Summary of Responses to the consultation paper on Conduct of Councillors – Local Investigation and Determination of Misconduct Allegations and the insight it gives to both the current Regulations and proposed Regulations arising out of the current Local Government Bill, be noted.

10. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME - VARIATION IN RESPECT OF CHILDCARE PROVISION

The Town Clerk submitted a report that sought the views of the Committee regarding a variation to the childcare provision within the current Members Allowance Scheme. The final decision to vary the scheme was the responsibility of Council.

Members were informed of the circumstances leading to the request for the variation to the current Members Allowance Scheme and of how it was felt that the Standards Committee could offer an opinion to assist Council in making their decision.

The proposed variation to the Scheme was reported as follows: -

“Except in particular circumstances where a higher hourly rate is necessarily

incurred, as authorised by the Town Clerk after consultation with one or both co-Chairs of the Standards Committee and the Whips of each of the political groups the maximum hourly rates not to exceed: -

£4.10 for childcare

£5.47 for dependent relative

The payment of all Dependent Carers and Childcare Allowances will be subject to a maximum of 40 hours claimable per month for Members in receipt of a Basic Allowance, with raised maximums pro-rata-ed to the Special Responsibility Allowances where received.”

Following discussion the Standards Committee supported the proposed variation to the current Members Allowance Scheme.

RESOLVED:

that the proposed variation to the current Members Allowance Scheme, as reported, be recommended for approval by Council.

11. AGENDA NOTE: COMPLAINTS RELATING TO ELECTED MEMBERS

The Town Clerk submitted a table, setting out chronologically the number and nature of complaints received against Elected Members.

The Committee noted that, of the four complaints received since the monitoring report to Committee had begun, only one was under investigation by the Standards Board for England.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

12. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 6.36pm.