

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held in Committee Room 2, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on Wednesday 11 April 2007 at 2.00pm.

Present: Mr D Baker (Chairman)
Councillors Mrs Allgrove and Mrs Whitmarsh
Mrs A Elder, Mr W L Rogers and Mr M Stanbury

Officers: Mr J J Thornberry (Monitoring Officer), Mr G P Dyke (Democratic Services Manager), Mr D Greig (Parish Liaison Officer) and Mrs D Durham (Democratic Services Officer).

12. Apologies

Councillors Croad and Slattery
Mrs P Hawks and Mr H Inder

13. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 7 March 2007 were taken as read and were signed.

It was agreed that future meetings of the Standards Committee should start at 2.15pm.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that he had received Mr David Gollin's resignation as an Independent Member of the Standards Committee.

Reference Minute Number 9/2007, the Democratic Services Manager reported that the new members Welcome Day would be held on 11 May 2007 and would include details of Ethics and Probity. The Chairman of the Standards Committee would talk to the Councillors about the role of the Standards Committee. In addition, a Standards and Ethics Training Session had been arranged for the evening of 11 July 2007 and members of the Standards Committee would be welcome to attend.

The Parish Liaison Officer submitted details of the proposed training for Parish Councils. All Parish Councils in Taunton Deane would be invited to meetings, where training on the new Code of Conduct would be provided. In addition, training with individual Parish Councils would be carried out by the Parish Liaison Officer.

Some members felt that Parish Councils should be brought together for the training, rather than individually and it was suggested that Mr L Rogers brought a pilot system to the next meeting of the Standards Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED that the Independent Members be given the opportunity to attend all Parish Council training sessions regarding the new Code of Conduct.

14. The Local Authorities (Model Code of Local Government Conduct) Order 2007

The Model Code had been produced and many of the changes and concerns were highlighted. It was felt that the Code was too imprecise and contained too many opportunities for different interpretations and would lead to an inconsistent approach.

Although the Standards Board for England were hoping to provide guidance for the Code in May, it was agreed that a working guide was required, that could be used in conjunction with the new Code. The Monitoring Officer was confident that such a guide would be produced by the Somerset Monitoring Officer Group.

The Code had to be adopted within 6 months and it was felt that it would be more beneficial if it was adopted at an early stage, in order that training for new councillors could include the new Code, rather than training them in the existing Code and then later in the revised Code.

The Code would be adopted by the Parish Councils and they were required to put advertisements in the newspaper, but the Council would fund this.

The Monitoring Officer was arranging for the Code to be presented in a more 'user friendly' format, in time for the Council meeting.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that he would submit details of the councillors training programme at the next meeting.

RESOLVED that the Council be recommended to adopt The Local Authorities (Model Code of Local Government Conduct) Order 2007 and the production of guidance be actively encouraged.

(The meeting ended at 2.55pm)