

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

3 April 2003

Councillors: *Haley, *Laird, *Makanji, *GMMH Rahman Khan, Reynolds, *Rice, *Robertson and *Winskill. *Mr R. Lovegrove (Chair), *Mr R.Celaire, *Ms I. Francis and Mr N. Weber.

*Members present.

SC33. APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Reynolds and Mr N Weber.

SC34. URGENT BUSINESS:

None raised

SC35. GENERAL

At the request of a member of the Committee, the Chair requested legal clarification as to whether a meeting of the Standards Committee could proceed in the absence of the Monitoring Officer and was advised by the Legal Officer that meetings could proceed.

Discontent was aired concerning non-consultation with regard to other meetings being organised and held at the same time as that previously arranged and announced for the Standards Committee. It was hoped, however, that this did not reflect on the standing of this Committee and it was agreed that future dates and times of meetings would not be altered other than by agreement of the Chair.

RESOLVED:

That any change to the agreed timing of the Standards Committee meeting should only be made after prior consultation with the Chair. The Chair would confirm this resolution, in writing, to the Secretary.

SC36. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2003 be confirmed and signed.

SC37. MATTERS ARISING:

SC27 - The Chair had yet to approach the Editor of 'Insight', for an article to be published on the Standards Committee. He would now arrange for this to coincide with the anniversary of the formation of the Committee.

SC28 - It was agreed that the next report to Standards Committee on the progress of implementation of the Complaints Procedure would be at the 8 September meeting.

SC38. MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT ON REFERRALS RECEIVED FROM THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND

The Monitoring Officer reported that no referrals had been received from the Standards Board for England, as no progress had been made on Section 66 legislation. However, allegations of misconduct against two members of the Authority, referred to in the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January, had been referred to a Standards Officer for investigation. One option from this would be to refer to the Standards Committee, as the allegations might raise issues on consideration of the matter. The members in question had been informed.

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Monitoring Officer be noted.

SC39. MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT ON SECTION 66 LEGISLATION

It was reported that progress on Section 66 Legislation was moving forward, as an amendment to the Local Government Bill. The Regulations would proceed in two stages :

- April 2003 ~ Regime for Standards Committee to consider reports received from the Ethical Standards officer. This aspect would confer certain powers on what the Standards Committee would be permitted do.
- After the Local Government Bill, as revised, became law (Summer 2003) investigation would pass to the Monitoring Officer or his deputy. This would confer the authority to undertake investigations / or not.

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Monitoring Officer be received.

SC40. STANDARDS COMMITTEE WEB SITE

The Secretary summarised and updated the Committee on progress in establishing the Standards Committee Website. A debate ensued on the Terms of Reference, as ratified by Council in March 2002; this related to Item 6, bullet point 3 , 'To provide high level oversight of the authority's constitution.'

It was emphasised that a presence for the site was necessary and anything further could be added subsequently, once up and running. It was agreed that this should now be progressed and be established by end April 2003.

RESOLVED:

That the link to 'Standards Board for England' was considered satisfactory, no photographs to be included on the site, the Register of Members' Interests to be described as "Edited". That it be recommended that the wording of the Terms of Reference be changed to 'To provide ethical oversight of the following :

- Internal and external audit.
- Complaints and ombudsman cases.

- The authority's constitution.
- The Council's Member/officer protocol.'

This proposal to be presented to the Constitution Advisory Panel on 14 April 2003 and subsequently to Council for approval.

SC41. THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND: 'The Second Annual Assembly of Standards Committees' ~ 9-10 June 2003

The date, venue and programme of The Standards Board for England, Second Annual Assembly of Standards Committees was noted. The Chair would be attending, as would either the Monitoring Officer, or a member of his team. Other independent members who wished to attend were asked to complete the application form and submit to the Chair for consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the Chair report back to the Committee on the Assembly proceedings.

SC42. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Monday, 2 June 2003 at 19.30 Hrs.

ROGER LOVEGROVE
Chair

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