

**MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2008**

MEMBERS:	Councillors Diakides, Khan, Mallett, Whyte and Winskill
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INDEPENDENT MEMBERS:	Mr R. Lovegrove (Chair), Ms A. Loyd and Ms C. Sykes.
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Apologies Councillor Lister, Reid, Williams and Francis
Ms I. Francis

MINUTE NO. SUBJECT/DECISION

STCO18.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Williams, Reid and Lister, and from Independent Member Irene Francis.
STCO19.	URGENT BUSINESS The Chair agreed to the admission of one item of urgent business, 'Receiving and Considering Recommendations from the Standards Board for England in relation to complaint number SBE21513.08'. This item would be considered under New Items of Urgent Business at item 11.
STCO20.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were no declarations of interest.
STCO21.	MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 th June 2008 be confirmed and signed.
STCO22.	CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS There were no announcements from the Chair.
STCO23.	MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT The Monitoring Officer notified the Committee that one complaint had been received under the old arrangements, and that the report from the Standards Board for England would be considered at the meeting. Two complaints had been received under the post May 2008 arrangements, with one having been considered by an Assessment Sub-Committee already. A further Assessment Sub-Committee was being set up to consider the other complaint.
STCO24.	GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPER ENTITLED "COMMUNITIES IN

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CONTROL: REAL PEOPLE, REAL POWER CODES OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES”

The committee received a report on the recently published Government consultation paper to agree a response to be provided from Haringey prior to the 24 December 2008 deadline for receipt.

The committee agreed that the Monitoring Officer would, in conjunction with both political groups, produce a draft response that could be discussed at a special meeting to be held in December 2008 if required.

It was noted that the document included provision for the establishment of a National Code of Conduct for Officers; doubt was expressed over the appropriateness of Standards Committee Members commenting on this area.

RESOLVED:

1. That a detailed commentary on the proposals be circulated to the committee in due course.
2. That a draft be circulated to the Whips of both political groups, to allow input into the consultation from non-Committee Members of both parties.
3. That a meeting of the Committee to consider this response be arranged in December 2008 as necessary.

STCO25. DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS

The committee received a report containing draft guidance for the public on how complaints against Members were to be assessed and processed by the Standards Committee and its Sub-Committees.

Following a discussion amongst the Committee, Members requested that the guidance be agreed subject to a number of alterations being made, as reflected in the resolutions below.

RESOLVED:

1. That the timescale for acknowledgement in the criteria be amended to state that a response will be sent “within two working days”.
2. That the wording be amended to encourage the complainant to include as much specific information as possible, and to state that the form was merely the first stage of the investigation, with the Monitoring Officer determining the complaints validity.
3. That a paragraph be included in the Council’s complaints booklet advising on how to make a complaint against a Member.
4. That the information also be placed on the Council’s website.
5. That, subject to the above, the guidance be approved.

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STCO26.	<p>RECRUITMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE</p> <p>The committee received a report agreeing the recruitment process for an independent Member of the Standards Committee to take office from May 2009.</p> <p>The Chair informed the committee of an arrangement where one Independent Member would step down every year, to facilitate a rolling 'freshening' of independent Membership of the committee.</p> <p>Members agreed a mechanism similar to that used in the municipal year 2007-08 for the recruitment of the previous new Independent Member. They requested that an equalities monitoring form be included on a separate sheet of paper with the form, in addition to several minor grammatical changes to the text. Officers agreed to check the current figure of payable allowance prior to the advert being issued through the agreed channels.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>That the recommendations of the report be agreed, subject to the above alterations.</p>
STCO27.	<p>TRAINING</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer briefed the Committee on training options for both Members of both the Committee and the Council as a whole.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that it would benefit from training on the operation of Hearings in the new year, which the Monitoring Officer agreed to arrange. Members agreed to feedback input to the Monitoring Officer on what other areas of training they would find useful.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>That training on Hearings be arranged for Members of the Standards Committee, to take place in the new year.</p>
STCO28.	<p>NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>The Chair agreed to the admission of one item of urgent business, 'Receiving and Considering Recommendations from the Standards Board for England in relation to complaint number SBE21513.08'.</p> <p>Consideration of part of this item was subject to a motion to exclude the press and public to enable discussion of confidential information within the meaning of Section 63 of the Local Government Act 2000.</p> <p>The Committee received the recommendations of the Standards Board for England following their consideration of a complaint against a Haringey Councillor.</p> <p>The Ethical Standards Officer had found that although the Councillor had broken the code, no further action was required to be taken. The Standards</p>

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	<p>Committee was also advised to review the guidance offered to Members to help them understand their responsibilities with regards to exempt material.</p> <p>The Committee expressed their concern over several aspects of the judgement, although they were unable to come to a consensus view on an appropriate response. The Chair agreed to write to the Standards Board on behalf of the Independent Members only, stating their concern over the recommendations providing, and requesting a review. Although only writing on behalf of the Independent Members, he would also note 'general unhappiness' across the Committee itself with the decision.</p> <p>The committee agreed to defer any other action in relation to this matter until a further response from the Standards Board had been forthcoming.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the Chair of the Standards Committee write on behalf of the Independent Members to the Standards Board stating their unhappiness with the provided verdict as outlined above.2. That further action by the committee in this regard be deferred until a response from the Standards Board was forthcoming.
STCO29.	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>The next scheduled meeting was due to take place on Thursday January 15th 2009, at 7:30pm in the Civic Centre.</p>

ROGER LOVEGROVE

Chair