

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 8 September 2005.

PRESENT: Mr D H Bristow - Chairman  
Councillors Mrs B E Boddington,  
Mrs K P Gregory, and I R Muir.  
Messrs D L Hall, D McPherson and  
G Watkins

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors P J Downes, J A P Eddy and T D Sanderson.

### 13. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> June and 25<sup>th</sup> August 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 14. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Mrs K P Gregory and Mr G Watkins declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No.15 post by virtue of their involvement respectively in case nos 1 and 4 referred to in the Standards Board notifications.

### 15. CODE OF CONDUCT - STANDARDS BOARD NOTIFICATIONS

*(In view of their personal and prejudicial interests in the following item, Councillors Mrs K P Gregory and Mr G Watkins left the meeting for the duration of the discussion thereon.)*

By way of a report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee noted details of allegations referred to the Standards Board for England and the conclusions of the Board in each case.

The Committee were informed that the Board had decided not to take any further action in relation to allegations against a District Councillor and Members of Farcet and Southoe and Midloe Parish Councils but that a complaint made against a Member of Earith Parish Council had been referred to an Ethical Standards Officer. Having regard to the latter, the Monitoring Officer undertook to advise the Committee if the allegation relating to Earith Parish Council was to be referred for local investigation.

### 16. A CODE FOR THE FUTURE - CONSULTATION PAPER ON THE REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS - AN INITIAL RESPONSE

Further to Minute No.5 of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2005, the Committee received and noted a report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the

Minute Book) regarding the key issues which had emerged thus far in response to consultation on the review of the Code of Conduct for Members by the Standards Board for England.

In acknowledging that the Board were to make recommendations on the Code of Conduct to the Government in the Autumn, the Director of Central Services and the Monitoring Officer gave a short summary of the proposed content of those representations having attended the Standards Committees Conference the previous week.

The Committee noted the Board's recommendations that-

- ◆ there should be greater support for the Councillor's role as an advocate for their community;
- ◆ a reduction in the number of personal interests which need to be declared; and
- ◆ greater local discretion to grant dispensations.

The Committee further noted that reference had been made in the Board's recommendations to bullying, disclosure of information, behaviour outside of official duties, the misuse of resources, the abolition of the duty to report breaches, the need to discourage vexacious complaints and protect against intimidation. The Board had further suggested that the types of interests which needed to be registered should remain unchanged.

Members were pleased that the Board had pursued several issues commented upon in the Committee's response to the consultation and commended the decision to retain the requirement that all allegations should be referred in the first instance to the Board to be processed nationally.

## **17. CURRENT ISSUES**

A report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which updated Members on recent referral statistics, provided further guidance on the conduct of local investigations and announced the availability in the Autumn of a DVD on local investigations.

Following the recent determination hearing, the Monitoring Officer announced his intention to provide training for the Members and Parish Clerk at Oldhurst Parish Council and to write to all Chairmen and Clerks of Town and Parish Councils to ask that they act as advocates in their Parishes and remind their Members of important key messages in relation to the Code of Conduct and this area of governance.

In terms of the approach to training generally, a wide ranging discussion ensued during which a number of suggestions were made, while acknowledging the resource implications of this approach, the Committee

### **RESOLVED**

that the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer be requested to report further to a future meeting on the

training of Councillors in ethical standards and the Codes of Conduct.

**18. NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2005.

Chairman