

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held in Meeting Room 1, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Monday, 6 June 2005.

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs B E Boddington, P J Downes, J A P Eddy, Mrs K P Gregory, T D Sanderson and J Taylor.

Messrs D H Bristow, D L Hall, D MacPherson, D Pattison, and G Watkins.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor I R Muir.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that Mr D H Bristow be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th March 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors P J Downes, J A P Eddy and J Taylor declared a personal interest in Minute No. 9 poste by virtue of their acquaintance with persons referred to in the report of the Investigating Officer.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that Councillor T D Sanderson be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year.

The Chairman wished to place on record his appreciation for the assistance given to him by the former Vice-Chairman, Councillor A Hansard during his first year as Chairman of the Committee.

5. A CODE FOR THE FUTURE - CONSULTATION PAPER ON THE REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

(Councillor J A P Eddy declared a personal interest in the following item by virtue of his membership of Cambridgeshire County Council having previously responded to the Consultation Paper on behalf of that authority).

Further to Minute No. 25, the Committee considered a report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is

appended in the Minute Book) regarding the response received from all District Council Members following a request from the Committee for comments on questions raised by a Consultation Paper published by the Standards Board for England on the review of the effectiveness of the Code of Conduct for Members.

In noting that there had been little interest in the consultation, the Committee proceeded to discuss suggested responses to questions directed towards 29 key areas identified by the Board. In terms of the suggested response to questions 1 and 2 relating to the “general principles” and in the light of recent experience, Members considered that training on the Code of Conduct and ethical framework should be made compulsory for all newly elected Councillors and a breach of the Code if not undertaken within a prescribed period after election to office. Having regard to questions 7 and 8 on “disrepute and private conduct”, reference was made to a recent case whereby a Councillor continued to hold office whilst exercising a right of appeal despite having been convicted of an offence and imprisoned. The Committee questioned whether a Member was fit and able to fulfil his/her duties to their ward and authority if they were imprisoned.

Subject to the incorporation of these comments in the response to the Board, the Committee

RESOLVED

that the suggested responses to the Consultation Paper – A Code For The Future as contained in the report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer now submitted be approved for submission to the Standards Board for England.

6. ETHICAL STANDARDS - IN YOUR HANDS

Following on from Minute No. 28 of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th March 2005, Members considered a report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer and

RESOLVED

that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Councillor J Taylor, Mr G Watkins and one other Member of the Committee be authorised to attend the fourth annual assembly of Standards Committees Conference to be held in Birmingham on 5th and 6th September 2005.

7. APPLICATION FOR DISPENSATION

The Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer reported that the requirement for the Committee to consider an application for dispensation from a Parish Council in the District ultimately was found not to be necessary.

8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the personal circumstances of particular persons.

9. OLDHURST PARISH COUNCIL - ALLEGED BREACH OF CODE OF CONDUCT

A report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Annex to the Minute Book) to which was attached a copy of the final report by the Investigating Officer in response to the allegations made against two Councillors serving on Oldhurst Parish Council.

Having regard to the advice of the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer, the Committee

RESOLVED

that the report now submitted be received and the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer be authorised to make necessary arrangements to convene a Determination Hearing in accordance with the Local Authorities (Code of Conduct) (Local Determination) Regulations 2003.

Chairman