

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 Thursday, 6 July 2006.

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs B E Boddington, I R Muir and J Taylor and Messrs D H Bristow and D L Hall

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors P J Downes, J A P Eddy, Mrs K P Gregory, D McPherson, D Pattisson, T D Sanderson and Mr G Watkins

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

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

2. MINUTES

Subject to the deletion of the word "Councillor" which prefaced Mr Bristow's name in the record of those attending at the last meeting, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9th March 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Chairman, Mr Bristow declared a personal interest in Minute No. 6 by virtue of his membership of a social club which utilised the facilities of The Millennium Community Centre, Buckden.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

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

5. THE STUKELEYS PARISH COUNCIL - ALLEGED BREACH OF CODE OF CONDUCT

The Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that Section 55 (6) (b) of the Local Government Act 2000 required a Parish Council representative to be present at a meeting of a Standards Committee when matters relating to Parish Councils for which the District Council was the responsible authority were being considered. As both Parish Council

representatives were absent from the meeting, the report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer regarding the alleged breach of The Stukeleys Parish Council's Code of Conduct was deferred.

6. APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION

Further to Minute No. 5 and as this item also required the presence of a Parish Council representative to enable the business to be conducted, the applications for dispensation received from Alconbury and Buckden Parish Councils were deferred.

7. CODE OF CONDUCT - STANDARDS BOARD NOTIFICATION

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 decision of the Standards Board for England not to take any further action in relation to an allegation made against a Councillor serving on the District Council.

8. INTRODUCTION TO THE "CASE ALERT"

Further to Minute No. 29 of the last meeting of the Committee, Members considered a report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the launch, by the Standards Board for England, of a new facility entitled "Case Alert".

The Committee were informed that the "Case Alert" would provide regular indepth analysis of significant cases and best practice guidance drawing upon decisions by Standards Committees, the Adjudication Panel for England and the High Court. Having commented on the usefulness of the "Case Alert" and reviewed details of the first issue which examined a case involving decisions on personal and prejudicial interests and their affect on Members' human rights, it was

RESOLVED

that the "Case Alert" be submitted to future meetings of the Committee in place of "Case Summaries" produced by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer and that, as originally intended, the attention of Town and Parish Councils continue to be drawn to any issues highlighted.

9. 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) updating Members on a variety of matters relating to the work of the Committee, including the publication of a new guide by the Standards Board for England entitled "How to Make a Complaint" and details of recent referral statistics, including those involving local investigations.

Having regard to the Fifth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees Conference to be held in Birmingham on 16th and 17th October 2006, Councillor Mrs Boddington and Mr Hall expressed their interest in

attending and the Deputy Monitoring Officer undertook to contact those Members of the Committee who were not present for their interest in the remaining two places.

In response to a letter received from a Parish Councillor in Huntingdonshire regarding the absence of the contact details of the non-elected Members and the Parish Council representatives on the Committee on the District Council's web site and whilst acknowledging that the independent members present had no objection to their details being made available, the Committee requested the Deputy Monitoring Officer to establish what practices for publicising such information had been adopted by other authorities in Cambridgeshire and to report back to the next meeting.

10. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 14th September 2006 at 4.00pm.

11. DVD

As there were few Members present, it was agreed to postpone, until the next ordinary meeting, the showing of the DVD prepared by the Standards Board for England on local investigations and the conduct of local hearings.

Chairman