

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, 14 September 2006.

PRESENT: Mr D H Bristow - Chairman
Councillors Mrs B E Boddington, P J Downes, D L Hall, D MacPherson and Mr G Watkins.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs K P Gregory, I R Muir, T D Sanderson and J Taylor.

18. MINUTES

Subject to an amendment to Minute No. 13 to reflect that Cambridgeshire County Council elections were held in 2001 and not 2005, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th July 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19. COUNCILLOR J A P EDDY

The Chairman paid tribute to Councillor J A P Eddy, who had passed away recently and acknowledged the help and advice that he had been given by Councillor Eddy when first elected to chair the Panel and the wealth of experience that Councillor Eddy had contributed to meetings as a long standing Member of the Committee.

20. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None were declared.

21. CODE OF CONDUCT - STANDARDS BOARD NOTIFICATIONS

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 were notified of decisions taken by the Standards Board for England in respect of allegations made against two Members of the District Council and against three Councillors serving on Ramsey Town Council.

The Monitoring Officer reported that the complainant in the case involving two District Councillors had requested a review of the decision of the Board not to refer the complaint for investigation but that following this process, the Board had concluded that the case had been handled correctly and that the final decision was reasonable.

The Committee also were informed that, as far as the Monitoring Officer was aware, no further information had yet been submitted to

assist the Standards Board in determining whether further action would be required against two of the three Councillors serving on Ramsey Town Council against whom allegations had been made.

22. TRAINING - ROUND-UP

A report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) describing the activities undertaken to fulfil the Committee's obligation in terms of training and advice on issues relating to the local ethical framework and code of conduct was received and noted.

Members expressed their disappointment at the number of parish councillors who had attended training sessions over the summer but acknowledged that should a local parish council become involved in a case attracting media coverage it would encourage greater interest in pursuing an understanding of the Code of Conduct.

Referring to the direction issued by the Standards Board for England to provide training and guidance to all Members of Sawtry Parish Council, the Monitoring Officer reported that he was not aware of any sanctions which could be imposed by the Board were he unable to comply with the direction.

23. A NEW APPROACH - LOCAL INVESTIGATIONS

Further to Minute No. 27 of the meeting held on the 9th March 2006, 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 details of a new approach, devised by the Standards Board for England, to monitor the progress of investigations being undertaken locally.

Members were informed that as part of its new role as regulator, the Board would ensure that any concerns that might emerge during an investigation, in terms of process/timescale/interpretation could be dealt with in a timely and appropriate way. The Committee also noted the Board's recommendation in respect of the appointment of Investigators and the need for Monitoring Officers to satisfy themselves that the person appointed had the necessary skills and resources to undertake the investigation thoroughly.

24. NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

that the next ordinary meeting of the Committee be held at 10am on Thursday 7th December 2006.

25. DVD

The Committee viewed a DVD prepared by the Standards Board for England on local investigations and the conduct of local hearings.