

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, 5th July 2007.

PRESENT: Mr D L Hall – Chairman
Councillors J D Ablewhite,
Mrs B E Boddington, P J Downes,
R S Farrer, I R Muir and T D Sanderson.

Messrs P L Boothman, M Lynch,
D MacPherson and G Watkins

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor G S E Thorpe.

10. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14th June 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11. MEMBER'S INTERESTS

Councillor Mrs B E Boddington declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 12 by virtue of her membership of Great Gransden Parish Council.

Councillor T D Sanderson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 12 by virtue of his membership of Huntingdon Town Council.

12. APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION

(See Minute No. 11 for Members' interests).

The Committee were acquainted, by way of a report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) with the details of six applications received for dispensations which would allow Members of Colne, Ellington, Great Gransden, Huntingdon, St. Neots and Upwood and The Raveleys Town and Parish Councils to discuss and vote on matters relating to particular circumstances in their parishes.

Having considered the circumstances of each application in turn, the Committee reiterated their unease at granting dispensations in a situation where all Members of a Town/Parish Council served as trustees to a community facility. It was the view of Members that other individuals unrelated to the local council should be invited to act as Trustees given the inevitable conflicts of interest which could arise.

Having been reminded that the Charity Commission had offered, in the past, to assist town and parish councils to vary their trustee arrangements to overcome conflicts of interest, the Committee requested the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer to suggest to those Parish Councils from whom applications had been submitted that they explore ways of changing their trustee arrangements to encourage people other than Councillors to become trustees.

In view of some uncertainty in the detail of the application received from Huntingdon Town Council in respect of the Board of Trustees for the Commemoration Hall, Huntingdon, the Committee requested the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer to seek further clarification from the Deputy Town Clerk which would demonstrate that the transaction of the Town Council's business would be impeded if the six members referred to in the application were not granted dispensation.

Having been reminded of the provisions of the Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) (Dispensations) Regulations 2002 and been satisfied that approval was required in the remaining cases to prevent the transaction of Parish Council business from being impeded, the Committee

RESOLVED

- (a) that dispensation to speak and vote be granted to Colne Village Parish Council for the period ending 30th April 2011 to enable them to speak and vote on matters relating to the Village Hall and Playing Fields in Colne;
- (b) that dispensation to speak and vote be granted to four Members of Ellington Parish Council for the period ending 30th April 2011 to enable them to speak and vote on matters relating to the Ellington Village Hall Management Committee;
- (c) that dispensation to speak and vote be granted to Great Gransden Parish Council for the period ending 30th April 2011 to enable Members to speak and vote on matters relating to Great Gransden Reading Room and Public Recreation Ground;
- (d) that dispensation to speak and vote be granted to Huntingdon Town Council for the period ending 30th April 2011 to enable Members to speak and vote on matters relating to the King George V Playing Field, Huntingdon;
- (e) that dispensation to speak and vote be granted to St. Neots Town Council for the period ending 30th April 2011 to enable Members to speak and vote on matters relating to St. Neots Outdoor Swimming Pool and Ackerman Street Playing Field, Eaton Socon; and

- (f) that dispensation to speak and vote be granted to Upwood and The Raveleys Parish Council for the period ending 30th April 2011 to enable Members to speak and vote on matters relating to the Charities associated with allotments for the poor in the Parish.

13. TRAINING ISSUES

Further to Minute No. 6 of their meeting held on 14th June 2007, the Committee received a report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) proposing an approach to be taken by the Monitoring Officer towards training activity on the new Code of Conduct. In response to Members' comments at the last meeting, the Committee also noted a case summary which illustrated the requirements of the Code in terms of the declaration of personal and prejudicial interests.

During a wide ranging discussion, the Committee were advised that training on the Code of Conduct could not be made mandatory for all Councillors, that depending on the response, consideration would be given to hosting an additional training session in the north of the District and that the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer would seek to establish, after 1st October, whether all town and parish councils in Huntingdonshire had adopted the new Model Code.

Having also commented on their role and terms of reference, the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer undertook to place a copy of Article 9 of the Constitution relating to the Committee, on the Agenda for the next meeting.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held at 4pm on Thursday 13th September 2007.

Chairman