

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the REFERRALS (ASSESSMENT) SUB COMMITTEE held in the Cabinet Room, Pathfinder House, St. Mary's Street, Huntingdon on Monday, 7 July 2008.

PRESENT: Mr P Boothman – Chairman
Councillor Mrs B Boddington and
Mr G Watkins

1. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Mrs B E Boddington declared a personal interest in Minute No. 5 by virtue of her membership of the Conservative Group on the District Council of which the Councillor against whom the complaint had been made, was Leader.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committee were noted.

3. GUIDANCE TO ASSIST ASSESSMENT OF CASE

The Guidance produced by the Standards Board for England and collated by the Monitoring Officer to assist the Sub-Committee in their assessment of the case was received and noted.

4. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information under paragraph 7c relating to the deliberations of the Sub-Committee of the Standards Committee established under the provisions of Part 3 of the Local Government Act 2000.

5. PRE-ASSESSMENT REPORT AND ENQUIRIES

The Chairman stated the purpose of the proceedings and led the Sub-Committee in their consideration of the following documents (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book) obtained by the Monitoring Officer to assist the Sub-Committee in its deliberations –

- (a) letter from complainant dated 9th June 2008;
- (b) press release dated 22nd February 2008;
- (c) extract from Huntingdonshire Matters dated 29th February 2008;

- (d) extract from Council Minutes
 - ◆ 20th February;
 - ◆ 16th April 2008;
- (e) letter in response to complaint to the Commission for Local Administration for England dated 28th March 2008;
- (f) report by the Head of Planning Services to the meeting of the Cabinet held on 26th June 2008;
- (g) extract from the District Council's Code of Financial Management; and
- (h) Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

The Chairman circulated a further paper which detailed, in chronological order, the series of events which had preceded the complaint. Mr Boothman also referred to a series of relevant facts drawn from the material collated by the Monitoring Officer. An extract from the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 26th June 2008 relating to the approval of funding options to contribute towards a County Council scheme of improvements to the A141 Kings Ripton Road, Huntingdon also was distributed. Both documents also are appended in the Minute Book.

6. INITIAL ASSESSMENT

The Sub-Committee proceeded to discuss the allegation made in the case seeking the advice of the Monitoring Officer as necessary and at the conclusion of their deliberations –

RESOLVED

- (a) that the allegation made by Councillor P J Downes against Councillor I C Bates be not referred for investigation; and
- (b) that the matter be referred to the Monitoring Officer for other action and Councillor Bates advised to exercise greater care in monitoring the content of press statements released in his name or office and the concerns of the Sub-Committee conveyed to those responsible for drafting, authorising and releasing press statements as set out in the "Decision Notice: Referral for Other Action" appended to these Minutes.

Chairman