

A meeting of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** will be held in the **MEETING ROOM, EASTFIELD HOUSE, LATHAM ROAD, HUNTINGDON, CAMBS PE 29 6YG** on **THURSDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2009** at **4:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

APOLOGIES

Contact

1. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2009.

**C Deller
388007**

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to personal and/or prejudicial interests and the nature of those interests in relation to any Agenda Items - please see Notes 1 and 2 below.

3. REPORTS OF SUB-COMMITTEES (Pages 1 - 2)

(a) Referrals (Assessment) Sub-Committee

To include:-

- ◆ update on arrangements made for training at Godmanchester Town Council;
- ◆ to discussed reference from Sub-Committee regarding the training of Chairmen of Parish Councils.

(b) Standards (Consideration and Hearing) Sub-Committee

To include:-

- ◆ Newspaper articles - enclosed;
- ◆ update on arrangements made for training at St. Neots Town Council;
- ◆ to confirm that formal notice of the outcome of Case No. 4 has been published in the Hunts Post Newspaper dated 25th August 2009.

4. STANDARDS ISSUES

To consider a report by the Head of Law, Property and Governance and Monitoring Officer regarding various matters of interest including indemnification arrangements and a "new look" for the Standards Board.

**C Deller
388007**

5. RECENT CASES OF INTEREST (Pages 3 - 6)

To note, for training purposes, the outcome of three cases recently determined by the Adjudication Panel for England.

6. LOG OF CODE OF CONDUCT INQUIRIES

To note the Code of Conduct Inquiries recorded by the Head of Law, Property and Governance and Monitoring Officer since the meeting held in July.

**C Deller
388007**

7. REGISTRATION OF FINANCIAL AND OTHER INTERESTS

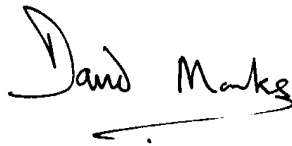
To note the action taken by the Head of Law, Property and Governance and Monitoring Officer to maintain the Register of Financial and Other Interests.

**C Deller
388007**

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday 3rd December 2009 at 4pm in the Aquarius Room, St. Ivo Leisure Centre, Westwood Road, St. Ives.

Dated this 26th day of August 2009



Chief Executive

Notes

1. *A personal interest exists where a decision on a matter would affect to a greater extent than other people in the District –*
 - (a) *the well-being, financial position, employment or business of the Councillor, their family or any person with whom they had a close association;*
 - (b) *a body employing those persons, any firm in which they are a partner and any company of which they are directors;*
 - (c) *any corporate body in which those persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000; or*
 - (d) *the Councillor's registerable financial and other interests.*
2. *A personal interest becomes a prejudicial interest where a member of the public (who has knowledge of the circumstances) would reasonably regard the Member's personal interest as being so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgement of the public interest.*

Please contact Ms C Deller, Democratic Services Manager, Tel No 01480 388007/e-mail: Christine.Deller@huntsdc.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the District Council's website – www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk
(*under Councils and Democracy*).

If you would like a translation of Agenda/Minutes/Reports or would like a large text version or an audio version please contact the Democratic Services Manager and we will try to accommodate your needs.

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

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Agenda Item 1

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held in The Aquarius Room, St. Ivo Leisure Centre, Westwood Road, St. Ives on Thursday, 9 July 2009.

PRESENT: Mr D L Hall - Chairman
Councillors J D Ablewhite,
Mrs B E Boddington, P J Downes, A Hansard
and T D Sanderson.

Messrs J Alexander, P L Boothman, M Lynch,
M Reece and G Watkins.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R S Farrer and G S E Thorpe and Mrs S Stafford.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that Mr D L Hall be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5th March 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Messrs P L Boothman and D L Hall declared a personal interest in Minute No. 11 by virtue of their memberships of the Sub-Committees in question.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

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

5. SUB-COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

RESOVLED

(a) that a Referrals (Assessment) Sub-Committee be appointed comprising one Independent Member, one town and parish Councillor and one district Councillor and that Mr M Lynch be elected lead Independent

Member and Chairman of the Sub-Committee;

- (b) that a Review Sub-Committee be appointed comprising one Independent Member, one town and parish Councillor and one district Councillor and Mr P L Boothman be elected lead Independent Member and Chairman of the Sub-Committee;
- (c) that a Standards (Consideration and Hearing) Sub-Committee be appointed to comprise five Members to consider investigation reports and hold determination hearings and that Mr D L Hall be elected lead Independent Member and Chairman of the Sub-Committee;
- (d) that the Head of Law, Property and Governance and Monitoring Officer after consultation with the relevant Chairman, be authorised to convene meetings of the Referrals (Assessment), Review and Standards (Consideration and Hearing) Sub-Committees as necessary and to appoint Members to the various Sub-Committees as appropriate in accordance with the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008.

6. ETHICAL STANDARDS AND THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Further to Minute No. 47 of the meeting held on 5th March 2009, the Chairman welcomed Councillor I C Bates, Leader of the Council to the meeting and invited him to address the Committee.

Having explained that as a Cambridgeshire County and District Councillor he represented the villages of The Hemingfords, Fenstanton, Hilton and Houghton and Wyton, Councillor Bates added that he had been able to observe, at first hand, how compliance with the Code of Conduct and the new ethical regime had improved and impacted upon meetings of the various parish councils which he attended. The improvement in the administration of parish council meetings was partly credit to the requirements of the standards regime and the training offered by the Committee and had enhanced understanding of the rules regarding personal prejudicial interests on the part of the parish councillors. At this point, Councillor Bates thanked the Independent Members and parish council representatives for their valuable contribution to the work of the Standards Committee.

However, Councillor Bates expressed concern at the estimated cost of the Standards Board for England quoting figures of £9.5m in 2007/08, the impact of the 2008 Regulations on local councils and the difficulty he perceived existed in attracting and retaining individuals to serve as Parish Councillors because of the requirements in terms of the registration of interests.

In terms of the 2008 Regulations, Councillor Bates referred to the number of cases which had been considered by the various Sub-Committees thus far and the impact this new regime had had on the District Council and questioned whether these issues could be

managed in a less bureaucratic way. On the same theme, he questioned the value for money, offered by the Standards Board and their accountability.

The themes presented by Councillor Bates promoted a general and interesting debate and on its conclusion, the Chairman thanked him for his attendance and contribution to the meeting.

7. THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE (FURTHER PROVISIONS) (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2009

The Committee received and noted a report by the Head of Law, Property and Governance and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the implications of the coming into force of the Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Regulations 2009.

Members noted that the Regulations which came into force on 15th June 2009 made provision for the Standards Board for England to suspend the functions of a local Standards Committee where the Committee was failing to perform its functions satisfactorily either to discharge the functions itself or to arrange for another authority's Standards Committee to discharge them. The Regulations also give authorities the power to establish joint Standards Committees and extend the power of Standards Committees to give Members' dispensations where they would otherwise be prohibited from participating on the matter because of a prejudicial interest.

8. STANDARDS STATISTICS

By way of a report by the Head of Law, Property and Governance (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee received and noted statistical information on the performance of local authorities since the introduction of the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 and the outcome of two independent surveys which had measured "Support for the Code of Conduct" and the "Impact and Effectiveness of the Ethical Framework in Local Government".

Having regard to the findings of research undertaken by Cardiff University and their observation that Councils with better conduct tend to make involvement in training mandatory, and whilst acknowledging that a session on the Code was included in the new Member induction programme, the Monitoring Officer undertook to look into the legality of this step and to consider whether it would be possible to vary the Constitution to make code of conduct training for District Councillors mandatory.

Similarly, the Monitoring Officer acknowledged the need to set up further refresher training sessions on the code of conduct for town and parish Councils over the Autumn.

On the same theme, the Chairman reiterated his intention to review the content of the "Standards and Conduct" pages on the District Council's website.

9. OTHER ISSUES - ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES AND DISTRICT WIDE

Having considered a report by the Head of Law, Property and Governance and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee

RESOLVED

- (a) that Messrs J Alexander, D L Hall and G Watkins be nominated to attend the 2009 Annual Assembly of Standards Committees at the International Convention Centre, Birmingham on 12th and 13th October 2009; and
- (b) that the content of the article "Cracking the Code" published in the May 2009 edition of District Wide be noted.

10. LOG OF CODE OF CONDUCT ENQUIRIES

The Committee received and noted the Code of Conduct enquiries which had been recorded by the Head of Law, Property and Governance since the last meeting in March 2009 (an extract of the log is appended in the Minute Book).

11. REPORTS OF SUB-COMMITTEES

The Chairmen of the Referrals (Assessment), Review and Standards (Consideration and Hearing) Sub-Committees updated Members on the business considered by each Sub-Committee since the last meeting in March and in general terms, reported on the outcome of each case.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 3rd September 2009 at 4pm.

Chairman



AT YOUR LEISURE: Councillors John Davies and Jeff Dutton, chairman and vice-chairman of Huntingdonshire District Council, with Shirley and Michael Mockford.

Picture: SUPPLIED

51 WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2009 www.cambridge-news.co.uk

Member acted 'disreputably'

A COUNCILLOR has been found guilty of bringing his office into disrepute.

Cllr Derek Giles, pictured, was found guilty of breaching St Neots Town Council's code of conduct at a Huntingdonshire District Council standards sub-committee hearing.

However, he was cleared of accusations of bullying. Cllr Giles, former leader of St Neots Town Council and the council's Liberal Democrat party, was accused of a series of allegations including bullying and harassment of former employee Margaret

Sharp. Those particular claims were dismissed by the standards sub-committee on June 18, but it ruled that Cllr Giles had "conducted himself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing his office of authority into disrepute".

It said Cllr Giles had "acted without the necessary authority in relation to discussions and exchanges" with Mrs Sharp, her trade union representative and the council's human resource consultants, on several occasions.



it added he had failed to declare an interest in respect of his "friendship" with Mrs Sharp at council meetings when issues relating to Mrs Sharp were discussed.

Cllr Giles read an apology to councillors at St Neots Town Council saying:

"Whilst I believe I had been acting in everyone's best interests I acknowledge that I have breached the code and I apologise to the council unreservedly."

Cllr Giles was ordered by the sub-committee to present an apology to the council and take training on the code of conduct. Now Cllr Jennifer Bird, leader of the St Neots Conservative party, who brought the complaint against him, has called for his resignation.

New-look centre opens its doors

THE new-look Huntingdon leisure centre was officially opened on Friday following a £1.5million re-vamp. Work on the St Peter's Road building was started in May 2008 and over a

series of stages the building has been

improved to include a larger gym area, a children's soft play centre and interactive zone, beauty treatment rooms, and a more spacious reception area.

The honour of declaring the new facilities open fell to longstanding leisure centre members, Shirley and Michael Mockford from Great Stukeley, who are both in their 70s.

They were also given lifetime memberships of all Huntingdonshire District Council-run leisure centres. Councillor Deborah Reynolds, who is responsible for leisure centres, said: "The new-look leisure centre is a great example of how an out-of-date and out-of-touch centre can be improved. We now offer more products as well as supporting the

traditional 'sports' to the community". St Neots leisure centre is next in line for a re-vamp and all will be renamed in 2010.

All five council-owned leisure centres are to be re-

Oneleisure

branded – at no extra cost, the district council claims – in a bid to attract more people to use them. The re-branding will see the removal of the current five independent leisure centre names and logos and these will be replaced by the corporate name 'One Leisure'.

Gemma Bonnett, HDC's leisure centres marketing and brand manager, said: "With many people relocating to this area, a town name followed by the words 'Leisure Centre' can conjure up a negative image. On the back of massive investment in the facilities and our products competing with and matching the private sector standards, now is the ideal time to change this."

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURE) ORDER 1995 LISTED BUILDINGS AND BUILDINGS IN CONSERVATION AREAS REGULATIONS 1990

PLANNING PERMISSION
 0900980FUL Various Residential Properties RAF Alconbury Ermine Street Little Stukeley
 Erection of 38 new bungalows on footprint of existing bungalows. Amendments to parking arrangements
 0900972FUL Land Between 8 And 18 Chapel End Sawtry
 Erection of a single dwelling
 0900969FUL Land Between 8 And 18 Chapel End Sawtry
 Erection of a single dwelling (plot 1)
 0900977FUL Land Adjacent To Thorns Farm Hamerton Road Alconbury Weston
 Change of Use of redundant farm buildings to holiday homes
PLANNING PERMISSION AFFECTING THE SETTING OF A LISTED BUILDING
 0900979FUL Land At 90 High Street, Needingworth
 Erection of a detached dwelling
PLANNING PERMISSION AFFECTING THE SETTING OF A CONSERVATION AREA
 0900981FUL The Well 5 Madeley Court Hemingford Grey
 Erection of entrance portico to replace approved entrance lobby on dwelling under construction
PLANNING PERMISSION AFFECTING THE SETTING OF A LISTED BUILDING AND A CONSERVATION AREA
 0900944FUL 6 Vicarage Fields Hemingford Grey
 Proposed sun lounge and attic conversion including installation of dormer window
 0900989FUL 1 The Retreat Sawtry
 Alterations and extension to existing dwelling. Erection of annex to replace outbuilding and erection of new garage
 0900994FUL HSBC Market Hill St Ives
 Alterations to main entrance door to provide disabled access
 0900975FUL Church Of St Mary Magdalene Church Road Warboys
 Erection of storage shed in Church Yard and position new boiler flue in vestry
CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT
 0900990CAC 1 The Retreat Sawtry
 Demolition of outbuildings

Any person wishing to make representations should write to the Head of Planning Services, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN within 21 days of the publication of this Notice. Copies of the submitted plans can be inspected at the Planning Division of the Operational Services Directorate. The application including documents and plans, is also available to view from Huntingdonshire District Council's Web site at www.huntsdc.gov.uk/planning It is also possible to submit any comments you care to make direct from this site to this office.

The provisions of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 require that any letters received may be made public and if an application results in an appeal, copies of representations will be sent to the Secretary of State and the Appellant.

In relation to householder applications, in the event of an appeal against a refusal of planning permission, which is to be dealt with on the basis of representations in writing, any representations made about such applications will be sent to the Secretary of State, and there will be no further opportunity to comment at appeal stage.

Steve Ingram
Head of Planning Services

Comment

POLICE dogs are getting pensions and pensioners are getting poorer. The decision to give the carers of Cambridgeshire's police dogs some money to care for the animals in their twilight years is a complete contrast to how the future is looking for many pensioners in Huntingdonshire.

The district council has made some stark predictions about the future of the area's aging population: the 65-plus age group is expected to increase by 13,700, more strain is going to be put on the NHS and, in the medium term, there's just not enough specialist accommodation to cope.

Then there's the state of the current accommodation: HDC found 20 out of 28 sheltered accommodation homes "do not meet current modern standards".

Work and money is needed to keep on top of the situation, and HDC is right to be taking steps to help give pensioners a decent quality of life after retirement.

Where the money comes from to do this is another question. Until the economy picks up, hands are tied.

But when the homebuilders are at work again and the economy is growing, it is essential that HDC and its partners act on this vital work.

We do not want Huntingdonshire's pensioners envious of Cambridgeshire's police dogs.



Name _____

Address _____

Telephone number _____

Category (please tick)

Restaurant of the Year _____

Food Producer _____

Pub of the Year _____

Best Independent Retailer _____

Best Breakfast _____

Best Home Grown Menu _____

Name/Business name _____

Address _____

Reason for nomination _____

Huntingdonshire
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Councillor apology

A ST Neots town councillor has apologised unreservedly for bringing his office into disrepute, claiming he made a 'simple mistake'.

Cllr Derek Giles has been found guilty of breaching St Neots Town Council's code of conduct at a Huntingdonshire District Council standards sub-committee hearing. The councillor was cleared of allegations of bullying a town council employee, but the committee ruled that Cllr Giles had 'conducted himself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing his office of authority into disrepute'.

It said Cllr Giles had 'acted without the necessary authority' in relation to discussions with the

employee, her union representative and the council's human resource consultants.

And that he failed to declare an interest in respect of his 'friendship' with the woman when she was discussed during personnel committee meetings.

As a result the councillor was ordered by the standards sub-committee to apologise to the town council and take training on the code of conduct.

Cllr Giles told *The Hunts Post*: "The only code of conduct that I fell foul of was that I did not declare a personal interest. This was a complete oversight on my part as I did not realise that a declaration of interest should have been made."

Leisure centre wind turbines

TWO wind turbines could be installed at the St Ivo Outdoor Centre in St Ives as part of a green scheme to boost power at the sports complex.

Huntingdonshire District Council wants to put up two 25 metre towers for the 15Kw turbines at the centre in California Road as part of an expansion of facilities at the site.

It wants to take action because the site has nearly reached capacity for the electricity supply and a second synthetic pitch, extra changing rooms and a training room are to be built, adding to demand.

Although electricity firm

EDF has been surveying the site to look at increasing capacity, the council is keen for a green alternative to help reduce energy costs.

A planning application by SRE Technologies, of Wellingborough, is being considered by council planners.

The turbines would go up on the western boundary of the outdoor centre more than 200 metres from the nearest residential properties. The turbines are estimated to produce more than 85,000Kw hours a year, saving 36 tonnes of CO2 and reducing electricity costs by 51 per cent.

STANDARDS ISSUES
(Report by the Head of Law, Property and Governance
and Monitoring Officer)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of -

- ◆ a new name and profile for the former Standards Board for England;
- ◆ the outcome of new research about the public perception of Councillors; and
- ◆ indemnification arrangements for Standards Committee Members.

1.2 The Items are presented for information.

2. A NEW IDENTITY FOR THE STANDARDS BOARD

2.1 From 1st July 2009 the former Standards Board for England revealed a "new look and feel" to their communications and re-introduced themselves as "Standards for England".

2.2 In changing their name "Standards for England" wanted to emphasise how their role has varied over the past 18 months. During that time the organisation has moved from being one which focused mostly on handling complaints to the strategic regulator of standards among local politicians -

"We believe in principled local politics, working with local authorities, their Monitoring Officers and local Standards Committee; it's our job to champion and promote high standards of conduct among our local politicians. We want to make sure the public are in no doubt that standards and principles matter to local government.

We've made changes after sampling the views of key stakeholders, including those in local government. We asked: what leadership do you expect from us ? Our communications will do more to highlight the positive aspects of conduct; making the point that ethical behaviour is both a good thing in itself and good for local democracy."

2.3 In short "Standards for England" now describe themselves as follows:-

"Standards for England provides the national and independent oversight necessary for there to be confidence in a locally based system of ethical complaints. Our responsibilities include:-

- ◆ giving Standards Committees and Councillors support and guidance on understanding the Code of Conduct, and on how to deal with complaints about the conduct of Members of their Council or Authority;

- ◆ monitoring the performance of authorities in the local assessment of complaints;
- ◆ publishing information about how councils and other authorities are dealing with complaints about their Members;
- ◆ working with Standards Committees to help them improve if they do not deal with complaints about their Members properly;
- ◆ removing the power of the Standards Committee to receive complaints about their Members, if we believe it necessary; and
- ◆ investigating the most serious cases where the local Standards Committee believes it is not best placed to deal with the matter and we agree with them".

3. PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF ETHICS

- 3.1 Recent research carried out for "Standards for England" has indicated that the public feel that local Councillors are more likely to be truthful than local MPs. A total of 1,735 adults were polled through Gfk NOP Research's Random Location Omnibus poll - adults aged 18 and above were interviewed face to face in their homes between 11th and 16th June 2009. The research report on public perceptions of ethics is now published and can be found on-line at www.standardsforengland.gov.uk
- 3.2 The research, which repeated questions asked previously in 2007 was carried out at a time when press coverage about MPs expenses was hitting the headlines. For local MPs, more people now think they "rarely or never" tell the truth than think they are "always" or mostly" truthful. Whilst only 2% feel Councillors "always" tell the truth, for MPs that figure drops below 1% and while 20% (18% in 2007) feel Councillors "never or rarely" tell the truth 29% (20% in 2007) feel that way about their local MP.
- 3.2 The Standards for England Chief Executive, Glenys Stacey, is quoted as saying "anecdotally we are told that the MPs expenses issue was much discussed on the doorstep during the recent local election campaign. It is pleasing, therefore, to see that trust in local politicians held up favourably compared to people's views about national politicians. Local Councillors sign up to a robust code of conduct allied to an effective local standards framework which deals with 2,800 complaints a year about England's 80,000 local politicians. The system is supported by "Standards for England", an independent national regulator with the status to deal with issues councils cannot manage themselves. Cases of the most serious wrong doing are rare, only 19 councillors were suspended or disqualified as a result of standards complaints in 2007/08. Working with English Councils, we need to do more to let local residents know how the standards framework is helping to safeguard high standards in local government".

PERCENTAGE RESPONSES TO: HOW OFTEN DO YOU THINK THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF PEOPLE TELL THE TRUTH?

	Always / most of the time		Sometimes		Rarely / Never		Don't Know	
	2007	2009	2007	2009	2007	2009	2007	2009
Your local MP	29%	24%	37%	40%	20%	29%	12%	7%
Your local councillor	30%	28%	38%	40%	18%	20%	14%	12%
Politicians in general	17%	14%	44%	40%	33%	42%	6%	4%

4. INDEMNIFICATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

4.1 "Standards for England" has raised some concerns with authorities about sufficiency and coverage of Councils indemnification arrangements. Under the Local Authorities (Indemnities for Members and Officers) Order 2004, local authorities can choose whether to indemnify their Members and "Standards for England" has recommended that Independent Members should be included in an authority's indemnification arrangements.

4.2 In response to a request to the District Council's Insurance and risk Officer to check the level of indemnification for Members, including Independent Members of the Committee, the Monitoring Officer has been advised that the Council has £2m indemnity for Officers and £1m indemnity for libel and slander which is considered to be sufficient. The Council's insurers and brokers also have not advised that it would be necessary to raise these thresholds when insurances have been renewed. It has also been confirmed that these arrangements cover the Independent Members of the Standards Committee.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The Committee is requested to receive and note the foregoing information.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Bulletin Numbers 42 and 44 and Press Release dated 5th August 2009.

Contact Officer: Christine Deller, Democratic Services Manager - Tel: (01480) 388007.

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08 July 2009

Gosport councillor disqualified for two years

The former deputy leader of Gosport Borough Council was disqualified from office for two years on Monday (6 July) following a Standards for England investigation.

The Adjudication Panel for England, an independent judicial tribunal, agreed with Standards for England's ethical standards officer that Councillor Peter Chegwyn had breached the Code of Conduct by failing to declare interests in matters relating to a live music festival he hoped to stage.

The Adjudication Panel also agreed with the ethical standards officer that Councillor Chegwyn had brought his office and authority into disrepute.

Councillor Chegwyn, in his private capacity as an events organiser, had been liaising extensively with the council in 2008 over his plans to stage a music festival at Stokes Bay. The festival was to be held on council-owned land and would need licences for alcohol sales and live entertainment. Councillor Chegwyn was the sole director of a limited company set up to handle the financial aspects of this festival.

Despite his role as the main event organiser and promoter, Councillor Chegwyn refused to declare an interest, even when prompted, during a council meeting in which a motion was proposed which included reviewing the terms of the arrangements between him and the council.

As well as refusing to declare an interest or leave the meeting, during which advice sought by the council on the legal implications of changing the arrangements was presented, Councillor Chegwyn also breached the Code of Conduct by voting. He cast his vote against the motion to change the terms of his agreement with the council over the fees and licensing for the festival.

The motion was lost by 16 votes to 17. Had the motion been tied, the Mayor - who had voted in favour of it - would have been given the deciding vote.

Dr Robert Chilton, chair of Standards for England, said: "Members must not only act ethically, but also be seen to do so by the general public.

"People have every right to expect high standards from those elected to represent them. Councillor Chegwyn's two-year disqualification recognises this, and sends a clear message to the electorate that councillors who breach the Code of Conduct can be brought to account."

17 July 2009

Somerset councillor disqualified for two years

The former deputy leader of Somerset County Council was disqualified from office for two years on Wednesday (15 July) following a Standards for England investigation.

The Adjudication Panel for England, an independent judicial tribunal, confirmed the Standards for England ethical standards officer's view that Councillor Paul Buchanan had breached the Code of Conduct by making a number of written allegations about Alan Jones, Chief Executive of Somerset County Council, which he knew to be spurious or exaggerated.

The Adjudication Panel found Councillor Buchanan made these allegations in an attempt to discredit the chief executive.

The Adjudication Panel confirmed the ethical standards officer's view that Councillor Buchanan brought his office into disrepute and used his position improperly to disadvantage Alan Jones.

In January 2008 Alan Jones alleged that Councillor Buchanan had made serious and unsubstantiated allegations of misconduct against him to two national organisations of which he is a member, and also to his employer, in an attempt to damage his reputation with his employer, colleagues and peers.

The Adjudication Panel for England found that Councillor Buchanan knowingly exaggerated the facts about certain issues in order to strengthen his serious misconduct allegations against Alan Jones.

The Adjudication Panel also agreed with the ethical standards officer that Councillor Buchanan was reckless as to whether he could substantiate the allegations he was making and found that he gave a series of changing and contradictory explanations as to how he had pursued alleged concerns from officers.

Dr Robert Chilton, chair of Standards for England, said: "When standing and acting in public office as a councillor, Councillor Buchanan willingly took on a responsibility to maintain a high standard of ethical behaviour. Councillor Buchanan's conduct has diminished confidence in his ability to fulfil his role as a councillor, which requires him to act selflessly and with honesty and integrity.

"We welcome the Adjudication Panel's decision to disqualify Councillor Buchanan, and hope this case reassures the general public that local government has a Code of Conduct that sustains good conduct amongst local councillors and deals with breaches of this Code appropriately."

27 July 2009

One year ban for councillor

A councillor from Needham Market Town, Suffolk, was disqualified from office for one year on Tuesday 21 July.

Following an investigation by Standards for England, Councillor Ian Mason's case was referred to the Adjudication Panel for England (APE) for determination.

The APE, an independent judicial tribunal, agreed with Standards for England's ethical standards officer that Councillor Ian Mason had breached the Code of Conduct by treating both a councillor and a council officer with disrespect.

In August 2008, six members of the town council alleged that Councillor Mason had called Councillor Josephine Lea and Deputy Clerk Kelaine Spurdens 'proven liars' at a council meeting. It was also alleged that Councillor Mason was given the opportunity to withdraw his remarks, but refused.

Councillor Mason chose to make his remarks at a council meeting on 7 May 2008, where Councillor Lea was being elected as Town Mayor. The ethical standards officer considered that the words used by Councillor Mason were both rude and offensive and were expressions of personal anger. His comment questioned the integrity, honesty and credibility of Councillor Lea and demeaned an important occasion for the council.

The ethical standards officer also noted that Councillor Mason's breach of the Code came after he was suspended for a three months in November 2006 by Mid Suffolk District Council's standards committee, for similar conduct related to failing to treat Councillor Lea with respect.

Dr Robert Chilton, chair of Standards for England, said: "While it is only right that members are entitled to challenge their fellow councillors and officers about their work, they have a duty to respect other people. In failing to do this, Councillor Mason has undermined confidence in his office and the council as a whole, and the one year disqualification reflects this."

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CODE OF CONDUCT ENQUIRIES SINCE 9TH JULY 2009

Case No.	Date of Enquiry		Nature of Enquiry <i>(Brief Details)</i>	Advice Given <i>(Brief Details)</i>	Code of Conduct Reference <i>(Para No.)</i>
50.	7.7.09		Enquiry as to the interest which a Parish Councillor would need to declare as the Parish Council representative on the Village Hall Trust when the Trust was discussing financial matters in connection with the village hall ie giving of a grant or a regulatory matter such as allowing the Village Hall Trust to use the playing field owned by the Council for a music festival – the use of which the Council has set conditions on the permission.	Advice given that the Councillor concerned had a prejudicial interest because the matter under consideration concerns the regulatory and financial position of a body through which the Councillor had a personal interest (CD).	8,10,12

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REGISTRATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS
(Report by the Head of Law, Property and Governance
and Monitoring Officer)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Committee will be aware that in accordance with the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007, newly elected Councillors are required to register their financial and other interests with the District Council's Monitoring Officer within 28 days of their election or appointment to office. Under Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000, the Monitoring Officer must establish and maintain a register of interests of the Members and co-opted Members of the Authority. This is available for public inspection at Pathfinder House. Copies of registration forms signed by the Monitoring Officer are returned to the Parish Councils to be held locally.
- 1.2 Set out below for the Committee's information is the up-to-date position in terms of the return of registration forms from the 73 town and parish councils in Huntingdonshire.

2. CURRENT POSITION

- 2.1 Copies of relevant forms are despatched in advance by the Monitoring Officer to those parishes where elections are to be held in any year. Subsequent reminders are sent to those Parish Clerks who fail to submit their returns. In 2009, there were no ordinary Parish Council elections so the Monitoring Officer has taken the opportunity to review the register in its entirety. Letters were sent to Parish Clerks on 26th May and 14th August 2009 following up those forms which appeared dated or were still outstanding or otherwise asking Clerks to submit 'no changes signed declarations'.
- 2.2 Of the 672 Councillors elected or/appointed to office, registration forms have been received from 630 and 42 are outstanding. Of the 42 outstanding, 22 are vacancies and of the remaining 20 some are due from recently elected Councillors
- 2.3 The Monitoring Officer has always tried to engage the co-operation and support of Parish Clerks in under-taking this exercise in the belief that this approach would secure a greater return. Standards for England advise that Councillors should review their declarations every six months. If declarations continue to be accurate record of a Councillor's interests, 'Standards For England' encourage authorities to request the return of 'a declaration of no changes' form. This certifies that the content of the current registration forms held for that Parish by the Monitoring Officer remain unchanged. Therefore, in addition to the 19 individual forms outstanding, 'no changes' forms are still awaited from –

Abbots Ripton PC	Hemingford Grey PC
Abbotsley PC	Holme PC
Alconbury Weston PC	Houghton and Wyton PC
Buckden PC	Huntingdon TC
Bythorn and Keyston PC	Kimbolton and Stonely PC
Colne PC	Offord Cluny and Offord D'Arcy PC
Conington PC	Old Hurst PC
Earith PC	Pidley-cum-Fenton Parish
Easton PC	Ramsey TC
Ellington PC	Sawtry PC
Elton PC	Somersham PC
Eynesbury Hardwicke PC	St Neots Rural PC
Farcet PC	Toseland PC
Folksworth and Washingley PC	Upwood and The Raveleys PC
Glatton PC	Waresley PC
Godmanchester TC	Woodhurst PC
Grafham PC	Woodwalton PC
Great and Little Gidding PC	Yaxley PC
Great Paxton PC	Yelling PC
Hail Weston PC	

2.4 In terms of individual Councillors and providing their 28 day period for registration of interests has not expired, the Committee might consider that, should forms still be outstanding by 30th September, the Monitoring Officer contact the Councillor concerned to suggest that further action may be taken against them as non-return of registration forms is itself a potential breach of the Code of Conduct.

2.5 In addition, the Monitoring Officer writes to all town and parish clerks in January each year, to request their assistance in reminding their Members to review their registerable interests and to update their entries should they consider it necessary to do so. Appropriate links and copies of forms are enclosed with this correspondence.

3. **CONCLUSION**

3.1 The Committee is requested to note the contents of the report and to consider what action, if any, the Monitoring Officer should take having regard to paragraph 2.3.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Register of Financial and Other Interests.

**Contact Officer: Christine Deller, Democratic Services Manager
Tel: (01480) 388007.**