

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, 8 December 2005.

PRESENT: Mr D H Bristow – Chairman.

Councillors P J Downes, Mrs K P Gregory, I R Muir and J Taylor.

Messrs D L Hall, D MacPherson and G Watkins.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs B E Boddington, J A P Eddy and T D Sanderson and Mr D Pattison.

19. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8th September 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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 noted details of allegations referred to the Standards Board for England and the conclusions of the Board in each case.

The Committee were informed that the Board had decided not to take any further action in relation to allegations made against a District and Huntingdon Town Councillor and Members of Great and Little Gidding Parish Council but having been reminded of a complaint made against a member of Earith Parish Council which had been reported to the last meeting, the Monitoring Officer advised that the Board had recently determined the case and that further details would be submitted to the Committee in March, 2006.

22. AN APPROACH TO TRAINING - DISCUSSION PAPER

Further to Minute No. 17 of the meeting held on 8th September 2005, the Committee considered a report by the Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) describing the training provided for Councillors on ethical standards and the codes of conduct.

Following the Chairman's attendance at the inaugural meeting of the Standards Committee Network for Cambridgeshire, the Committee welcomed the suggestion that they be given the opportunity to review

example cases following determination by the Standards Board, to assist their learning experience and to consider whether it would be appropriate to alert town and parish councils to any issues of interest.

The Committee reviewed a proposed framework for training and in response to their previous enquiry inspected a record of those Parish Councils/Councillors who had undergone code of conduct training.

Discussion ensued on the obligation placed on County and District Councillors by the Code of Conduct to advise the Standards Board for England if they reasonably believed that a breach of the Code had occurred at a meeting of a Parish Council at which they had been present. Given that this aspect of the Code currently was under review, the Committee were of the view that, in the first instance, Councillors should draw any concern they might have in that respect to the Chairman of the Council or Parish Clerk. The Monitoring Officer also undertook to consider whether it was necessary to issue specific advice to District Councillors on this question pending the outcome of the review of the Code of Conduct by the Standards Board.

Having been assured that the time and resources committed to training of town and parish councils compared favourably to that offered by other authorities, the Committee

RESOLVED

that the report and proposed framework for training be noted.

23. 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) which updated Members on recent referral statistics, reported on progress of the review of the Code of Conduct and the production of training aids to assist in the conduct of local investigations and announced the arrangements for the fifth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees.

Having been informed that a dvd on promoting best practice in local investigations and hearings was in the final stages of production, the Committee requested that it be made available for viewing at their next meeting.

24. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 9th March 2006.

Chairman