

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held in the Meeting Room, Eastfield House, Latham Road, Huntingdon, Cambs PE29 6YG on Thursday, 3 September 2009.

PRESENT: Mr D L Hall - Chairman

Councillors J D Ablewhite,
Mrs B E Boddington, P J Downes, R S Farrer,
A Hansard and T D Sanderson.

Messrs J Alexander, M Lynch, M Reece and
G Watkins.

Mrs S Stafford.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting
was submitted on behalf of Mr P Boothman.

13. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9th July 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Having regard to Minute No. 8, the Monitoring Officer reported that South Cambridgeshire District Council had strongly encouraged their Members to undertake code of conduct training but had not provided, within their Constitution, for training for Councillors to be mandatory. It was suggested that there may be an opportunity to incorporate the requirement for training on the Code of Conduct in the evidence required by the Council to attain the East of England Charter for Member Development.

Further to Minute No. 8, the Monitoring Officer advised that further refresher training sessions on the Code of Conduct for Town and Parish Councils would be held on the publication of the revised Code which it was anticipated would be in late Autumn 2009.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that a meeting to consider the content of the Standards and Conduct pages on the District Council's website would be held on 10th September 2009.

14. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

15. REPORTS OF SUB-COMMITTEES

(a) Referrals (Assessment) Sub-Committee

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr Boothman, the Monitoring Officer advised Members that in accordance with the Sub-Committee's decisions, arrangements had been

made for training to take place at Godmanchester Town Council on 10th September 2009. Referring to the question which had been raised by the Sub-Committee on the training of Parish Council Chairmen, the Monitoring Officer indicated that he would wish to seek to engage the support of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils on this issue and added that it might be possible to offer training to Chairmen on a "first come first served basis" at the end of the financial year. It was the opinion of Members that training should focus on both the Chairman and Clerk and that information should accompany election nomination papers explaining that there was a requirement for new Councillors to comply with a Code of Conduct.

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

The Committee noted information presented on the outcome of Case No. 4 and that arrangements were being made for a training session for Members of St. Neots Town Council to take place in October.

16. STANDARDS ISSUES

By way of 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 received and noted information in respect 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.

17. RECENT CASES OF INTEREST

The Committee noted for training purposes, the outcome of three case histories recently determined by the Adjudication Panel for England (copies of the cases are appended in the Minute Book).

18. 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 and Monitoring Officer since the last meeting in July 2009 (an extract of the log is appended in the Minute Book).

19. REGISTRATION OF FINANCIAL AND OTHER INTERESTS

A report by the Head of Law, Property and Governance and Monitoring Officer was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the up to date position in terms of the return of registration forms from the 73 town and parish councils in Huntingdonshire.

Members were reminded that newly elected Councillors were 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. Currently 18 registration forms and a number of "no change" forms were still outstanding from Parish Councils.

In terms of individual Councillors and provided their 28 day period for registration of interests had not expired, the Committee

RESOLVED

that where forms still were outstanding by 30th September 2009, the Monitoring Officer be requested to write, in the strongest terms, to the Councillor concerned to suggest that further action may be taken against them as non-return of registration forms was a potential breach of the Code of Conduct.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

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

Chairman