

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

10th March 2004
Committee Room, Riverbank House, Bideford

PRESENT: Councillors H R Barton, P R Collins, Mrs S A Mounce and
Mrs P J Paddon
Independent Members:
J Ager, Mrs V Gladman, Mrs R A Lock,
B Ormerod, D Radcliff and P Wood

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor A Eastwood OBE.

20. INTRODUCTIONS

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, introductions were made by the various Members.

21. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Resolved: That P Wood be elected Chairman of the Committee.

22. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Resolved: That B Ormerod be elected Vice Chairman of the Committee.

23. MINUTES

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th November 2003 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made at this time but the Committee were advised that the rules governing the District Council Members also applied to the Independent Members.

25. "HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT TO THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND"

A copy of this booklet had been circulated and Members were advised that new Regulations were anticipated. These were likely to involve preliminary investigations being carried out by the Committee prior to any formal hearing. The Committee discussed whether this could be before the whole Committee or a Sub-Committee. The guidance and advice available was that this should be for the Full Committee to determine. The question of substitutes was also considered and it was felt that substitutes would be not appropriate in terms of this Committee in view of the specialist nature of the work and the training involved.

Resolved: That the Constitution Working Group be requested to consider a proposal that no substitutes should be allowed to serve on the Standards Committee.

26. STANDARDS BOARD NEWSLETTER NO 1

The Committee received a copy of this newsletter and it was noted that this was issued on a quarterly basis. Reference was made to the future requirements in respect of training and information to be supplied to Parish Councils. This training to include the role of Chairman and Vice Chairman. It was also suggested that the role and function of the Standards Committee could be included as an item on the agenda for the future Area Advisory Groups.

The Committee considered that there was the potential for Members to attend Parish Council Meetings to advise on the role of the Standards Committee. This would have the effect of using the Committee as a resource and spread the burden in terms of training facilities. To assist in this process it was suggested that a bullet point check list be established with regard to the main issues involved.

In considering the newsletter, reference was made to the insurance issues highlighted. It was

agreed that this situation should be investigated.

Resolved: That the report be noted and the issue included on agendas for future Area Advisory Groups and a report made to the next meeting on options for training and education.

27. STANDARDS COMMITTEE DETERMINATIONS - GUIDANCE FOR MONITORING OFFICERS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEES

A copy of this Guidance Note was circulated for information, with particular reference to the new Members of the Committee.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

28. MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT AMENDMENTS AND IMPROVEMENTS

A copy of the model Code of Conduct which had been adopted by the District Council was submitted. This document would also be circulated to the independent Members of the Committee for their individual acceptance.

The Committee were advised that the District Auditor had requested clarification of the Council's position in respect of specific areas and in particular the "registration of gifts and hospitality". It had been suggested that the upper limit could be reconsidered and in addition reference made to any offers refused. It was suggested further information be obtained on this subject to include how other local authorities operated, including the County Council.

Resolved: That consideration of this item be deferred and a further report submitted to a future meeting.

29. TRAINING VIDEOS

The Committee viewed the training videos issued by the Standards Board for England.

30. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: That the next meeting be held at 2.15 pm on Tuesday, 27th April.

The meeting commenced at 2.15 pm and ended at 3.40 pm.

Date

Chairman