



Minutes of the meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held on THURSDAY 12 OCTOBER 2000 at 6.30 pm and MONDAY 31 OCTOBER 2000 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillor Stanyer (Chair)
Councillors Edwards (12 October 2000 only), E Henderson (Substitute for Councillor Hardwick), Pugh and White (12 October 2000 only)

Officers: M Jones (Head of Legal and Property Services), J Moffoot (Head of Democratic Services), D Wilkinson (Chief Internal Auditor) and S Heap (Democratic Services Manager (Council))

Also Present: Councillor O'Sullivan

ST2/01 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED -

That Councillor Edwards be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee for the Council Year 2000/01, or until such time that an Independent Chair is appointed.

ST3/01 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 March 2000 and of the special meeting of the Committee held on 23 May 2000 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

ST4/01 INDEPENDENT CHAIR

The Committee considered the possibility of appointing an independent Chair for the Committee and particularly how to select the individual. The Committee recognised that any person appointed would currently be unable to vote.

The Committee noted that the Local Government Act 2000, once brought into force, would require the Council's Standards Committee to appoint an independent person as part of this Membership with voting rights.

RESOLVED -

1. That an independent Chair be appointed to the Committee.
2. That the position be advertised locally and regionally.

3. That the person specification for the position be agreed, subject to a requirement that the person is not politically active similar to the restrictions placed on officers by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
4. That officers be requested to draw up a shortlist of suitable candidates for consideration by the Committee.

ST5/01

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

The Committee noted the requirements of the Local Government Act 2000.

It was reported that the Act would allow, amongst other things, Authorities to promote the economic, social or environmental well-being; introduce executive arrangements for the political management of Councils and make provision for the conduct of Members and employees.

The Committee noted that the Council's Standards Committee, as well as being responsible for the Conduct of Members of this Council, would also be responsible for the conduct of local Parish Councillors and as such would need to include a Parish representative as part of its Membership when considering Parish Councillors' conduct.

RESOLVED -

1. That the report be noted.
2. That officers be requested to identify a suitable representative to represent local councils on the Committee or on a sub-committee of the committee, dealing with local Council matters.

ST6/01

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 - GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

The Committee considered the Government's Consultation Paper on the General Principles of Conduct to be introduced as a result of the Local Government Act 2000, and developed as a result of the principles included in the White Paper 'Modern Local Government - In Touch with the People'.

RESOLVED -

That the consultation document on the proposed General Principles of Conduct for Members be welcomed, subject to the following deletions:

- (a) Openness
'and your authority's requirements on confidentiality'.

(b) Leadership

'You must respect the political impartiality and professional role of the authority's statutory officers and other employees, and always act in a way that preserves public confidence in the authority'.

ST7/01 COMMITTEE NEWS SHEET

The Committee noted details on two recent court cases related to the work of the Committee.

ST8/01 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED -

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting by virtue of Paragraph 1 (Information relating to Office Holders of the Authority) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, in order that the Committee may consider the following matters:

- (a) Progress on Outstanding Investigations
- (b) Complaint Against a Councillor

ST9/01 PROGRESS ON OUTSTANDING INVESTIGATIONS

The Committee noted progress being made with the investigations of outstanding complaints against Councillors to the Committee.

The Committee also considered the resources available to the Committee to support the various investigations and various procedural issues.

RESOLVED -

1. That in respect of Case 5, the Councillor concerned be given 14 days to respond to the report on the investigation, once completed by officers, with a view to holding a meeting of the Committee to receive the report towards the end of November/start of December 2000.
2. That the current position in respect of Case 6, be noted.
3. That in respect of cases 3 and 4, officers be requested to continue with their investigations.
4. That the Chief Executive be requested to report to the next meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on the possibility of appropriate administrative support from within the Authority for secondment to the Internal Audit Section, to support the various investigations.
5. That officers be requested to prepare a modest bid for resources to support the work of the Committee, for consideration as part of the budget process 2000/01.

6. That when recommending that a sanction be taken against an individual Member, the Member concerned be given the opportunity to make representations to the Committee before the final decision is taken.
7. That, in future, where officers experience particular difficulty in proceeding with an investigation, the Committee be consulted as a matter of urgency.

(Councillors E Henderson and O'Sullivan not present during consideration of this Cases 3 and 4.)

(Councillor Edwards asked that his vote against resolution 3 be recorded.)

ST10/01 COMPLAINT AGAINST A COUNCILLOR (CASE 8)

The Committee gave initial consideration of a complaint against a Councillor.

RESOLVED -

1. That the meeting be adjourned to give the Member the subject of the complaint, the opportunity to address the Committee.
2. That the meeting be reconvened on Tuesday 31 October 2000 at 6.00 pm.

(Councillor Edwards left the meeting before the Committee's initial consideration of the complaint.)

THE CHAIR ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 8.22 PM

ST11/01 CLOSURE OF MEETING - 31 OCTOBER 2000

In the absence of a quorum the Chair declared the meeting closed.