

Time Commenced – 2.30pm

Time Finished – 4.30pm

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

14 FEBRUARY 2007

Present: Reverend Canon R B Blowers – Chair
Mrs C McDowall, Mr P Sunderland
Councillors Jackson and Skelton

Officers in Attendance: Michael Foote, Corporate Director, Corporate and Adult Social Services
Steve Dunning, Assistant Director – Democratic Services

11/06 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Latham.

12/06 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

13/06 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2006 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to changing the word 'obligated' to 'obliged' in the second paragraph on page 3 of the minutes, and signed by the Chair.

14/06 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

15/06 Standards Board Annual Assembly 2006 Feedback

Philip Sunderland gave a briefing on the Standards Board Annual Assembly 2006 which he had attended. The main sessions included:

- An effective ethical environment – where are we going?
- Implications of the revised Code and the future ethical environment
- How do we measure up?
- Bridging the Gap: knowledge, techniques and skills, awareness, development and wider debate.

Resolved to note the report.

16/06 Independent Members Association

The Committee considered a report by Philip Sunderland which stated that there was a proposal to set up national association of independent members of Standards Committees. At a meeting of Derbyshire independent members on 22 November 2006 it was felt that a looser structure at a regional level was more appropriate, where best practice could be shared.

Resolved to note the report.

17/06 Briefing Note on the Draft Revised Code of Conduct for Members and Consultation on Amendments to the Model Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members

The Committee received a briefing note on the draft revised Code of Conduct for Members from the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors and a consultation paper from the Local Government Information Unit.

The briefing note posed a set of questions. The Committee made the following comments:

Question 1 – Paragraph (3) (a) (iii) should contain an additional paragraph sub paragraph – ‘(cc) of information that would otherwise be required to be disclosed under Freedom of Information Act 2000.’

Question 2 – Yes

Question 3 – The publicity code does serve a useful purpose and should be retained in its current form. It should apply to all relevant authorities.

Question 4 – No. The requirement to declare gifts and hospitality at meetings is disproportionate and will lead to confusion and numerous technical breaches of the code. There is no objection to registering gifts and hospitality and the register being open to public inspection.

Question 5 – Yes

Question 6 – Yes

Question 7 – Yes

Question 8 – The use of ‘you’ is preferred as being clearer and more accessible

Resolved to ask the Corporate Director Corporate and Adult Social Services to respond to the briefing note expressing the Committees comments to the questions posed in Annex B of the briefing note.

18/06 Complaints and Investigations Monitoring

The Committee noted that there were no outstanding complaints. A previous complaint dealt with by the Committee had been referred to the Ombudsman who had found in the Council's favour.

Resolved

- 1. To note the report and receive decisions of complaints as a standing item at future meetings.**
- 2. To agree that itemised findings and reasons for decisions be recorded when the Committee is determining future complaints.**

19/06 Ethical Framework Update Training

Steve Dunning reported that a training session for Members had been held that day. Philip Sunderland offered to attend and help present future training sessions if required.

Resolved to note the report.

MINUTES END