

Time Commenced – 10.00am
Time Finished – 10.55am

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE
5 JANUARY 2005**

Present: Reverend Canon R B Blowers – Chair
Mrs C McDowall and Mr G Bagga
Councillors Baxter and Skelton

Officers In Attendance: Michael Foote - Director of Corporate Services

23/04 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

24/04 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to changing the spelling of Mrs McDowall's name.

25/04 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

26/04 Section 66 Regulations

The Committee were advised that the Section 66 Regulations had been confirmed and they were now able to undertake cases.

It was reported that the Local Government Act 2000 enabled ethical standards officers to refer allegations that a Member had breached the Code of Conduct to monitoring officers. There was an 8500 case backlog that would be reduced by delegating down.

It was noted that an ethical standards officer may refer an allegation at any point before they complete an investigation into the allegation. It was considered that cases that would be referred to the authority would be those less serious and in need of a lesser penalty, the allegation was of a local nature or was related to effective governance.

It was noted that cases would be less likely to be referred if there was evidence that a local investigation would be perceived as unfair or biased or there were any relevant local political issues that would have a bearing on the investigation.

Under the new regulations the Standards Committee could impose a variety of sanctions including, censure of the Member, restriction of access to premises and suspension, or partial suspension of the Member for up to three months.

After a hearing the Standards Committee must provide a full written decision to the relevant people within two weeks.

27/04 Changes to the Social Services Complaints Procedure

The Committee were advised that it had been proposed, from 1 April 2005, that the Stage 3 complaints process would reduce to 2 stages. Stage 1 would consist of informal resolution for 10 days, followed by 15 days for formal investigation into children's services or 25 days for formal investigation into adult services. It was proposed that Stage 3 Panels would be renamed Stage 2 Panels.

It was noted that if the proposals were to be implemented the final stage would be dealt with by an independent body.

Members raised concerns that if the complaint was linked to Education or another department it would be difficult to separate the complaints.

Canon Blowers queried if local people, for example the Standards Committee, would be required for hearings.

It was noted that members had until 21 January 2005 to comment on the proposals.

Resolved to request that the Director of Corporate Services investigate if Standards Committee members would be required for hearings.

28/04 Change of Standards Committee meeting date

Resolved to change the date of the Standards Committee meeting from 14 October 2005 to 21 October 2005.

MINUTES END