

Time Commenced – 2.00 pm
Time Finished – 4.05 pm

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE
23 APRIL 2004**

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

Officers In Attendance: Michael Foote - Director of Corporate Services
Helen Couperthwaite – Members Services Officer

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence. Reverend Canon Blowers particularly welcomed Councillors Baxter and Brown to the meeting as both had recently been in hospital.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

14/03 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

15/03 Procedure for Hearings

The Committee considered a procedure for Hearings.

Resolved to adopt the procedure for Hearings with the following amendments:

- change paragraph 7(a) to 7(b) and 7(b) to 7(a)
- in paragraph f(1) change 'Councillor' to 'Member'.

16/03 Local Determination

The Chair welcomed Councillor H S Dhamrait and Claire Lefort, Representative of the Ethical Standards Officer to the meeting.

The Committee considered a report from the Ethical Standards Officer in relation to an allegation made against Councillor H S Dhamrait. The allegation was that Councillor H S Dhamrait failed to disclose a personal interest in a proposed development application that was discussed and voted on at Planning Control

Committee on 20 February 2003. The proposed development site was located adjacent to property owned by Councillor H S Dhamrait.

The Committee considered submissions from the Ethical Standards Officer and Councillor H S Dhamrait. It decided the Councillor H S Dhamrait had breached the Local Government Code of Conduct. He failed to declare a personal and prejudicial interest and sought to improperly influence the decision.

The Committee decided that this was a serious matter and censured Councillor H S Dhamrait. In reaching its decision the Committee acknowledged that Councillor H S Dhamrait admitted his mistake, had received additional training and gave assurances that he would not make the same mistake again.

The Committee also recommended that to promote and maintain high standards of conduct, the Council provide further comprehensive training for all members on declarations of interest and, to strongly encourage all members to attend and complete in full any training provided.

Resolved:

- 1. to censure Councillor H S Dhamrait**
- 2. to recommend to Council that further comprehensive training on declarations of interest is provided for all members and, that all members be strongly encouraged to attend, and complete in full, any training provided.**

17/03 Local Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct

The Committee considered a consultation document on local investigations of allegations of misconduct. In response to questions set out for consultees, the Committee decided that:

1. the investigative powers proposed for monitoring officers were necessary and sufficient
2. the powers proposed for Standards Committees to consider reports referred to them by monitoring officers was necessary and sufficient
3. all cases investigated by the monitoring officer should be referred to the standards committee for decision
4. monitoring officers should be able to refer cases back to the Ethical Standards Officer if the matter was considered inappropriate to be considered in-house or if the Committee wanted to impose a bigger penalty than it has powers to approve

5. the balance between the actions required of monitoring officers under the proposed Amendment Regulations and the Standards Board's proposed guidance to monitoring officers was appropriate.

Reverend Canon Blowers also suggested that an explanation of suspension and partial suspension should be provided.

Resolved to forward comments, as set out above, on the Local Investigation of Allegations of Misconduct to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by 18 May 2004.

18/03 Standards Conference 2003

Resolved that Mrs McDowall and Councillor Brown would attend the Standards Committee in Birmingham on 13 and 14 September 2004.

19/03 Ethical Framework Training

The Committee reviewed the Ethical Framework Training that took place on 7 January 2004. It was agreed that the training was extremely useful but there were concerns that not all Councillors attended. It was noted that there was not one time of day that was convenient for all Councillors.

Resolved to note the report.

MINUTES END