
MEETING	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
DATE	20 NOVEMBER 2009
PRESENT	MRS BAINTON (INDEPENDENT MEMBER, IN THE CHAIR) COUNCILLORS HORTON (VICE-CHAIR), HUDSON, TAYLOR AND WAUDBY MR DIXON AND MR HALL (INDEPENDENT MEMBERS) COUNCILLORS CRAWFORD, FORSTER AND MELLORS (PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS)
APOLOGIES	MR WILSON (INDEPENDENT MEMBER)

PART A - MATTERS DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

22. INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair introduced Alison Lowton, the new Interim Monitoring Officer, and welcomed her to her first meeting of the Standards Committee.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. No interests were declared.

24. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 28 August 2009 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

25. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

26. REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF THE LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS FRAMEWORK

Members considered a report which provided information on the numbers and types of complaints received and dealt with by the Council since the introduction of the local assessment of complaints process.

Since May 2008, 7 complaints had been referred to the Assessment Sub-Committee, concerning a total of 6 parish councillors and 16 City councillors. The complaints had related mostly to treating others with disrespect, bringing the authority or the office of councillor into disrepute and failure to declare personal or prejudicial interests. The majority had resulted in a decision of no further action. Two complaints had been referred for investigation, of which one had been referred onwards to a Hearings Sub-Committee.

Having spoken to the external auditor, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that York had received a much lower than average number of complaints compared with other authorities. In the time available, it had not been possible to undertake a full qualitative assessment of the management of the cases dealt with, and Members might wish to receive a more detailed report in respect of future cases. The case dealt with by the Hearings Sub-Committee had raised some issues that could usefully be addressed in a training session. The Committee would also need to agree a pre-hearing process and a procedure for conducting future hearings.

RESOLVED: (i) That a more detailed report be received at a future meeting on the management of complaints to date, including details of the time and resources devoted to complaints, the application of the assessment criteria and whether complaints are being processed within the recommended timescales.¹

(ii) That a report be received at the next meeting setting out pre-hearing and hearing procedures for approval.²

(iii) That a training session be arranged for members of the Standards Committee, addressing the issues raised by the recent case dealt with at the Hearings Sub-Committee.³

REASON: To ensure that the Standards Committee maintains proper and effective oversight of the local assessment framework.

Action Required

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| 1. Schedule update report on complaints process on Standards Committee work plan for a suitable meeting date | FY |
| 2. Prepare report on hearings processes for meeting on 22/01/10 | AL |
| 3. Arrange training session on hearings of complaints | AEO |

27. OUTSTANDING ISSUES

Members considered a report which explained the current position in respect of the outstanding issues and reports on the Committee's work plan.

Due to the departure of the previous Monitoring Officer, the Committee's October meeting had been cancelled and the December meeting had been

brought forward to the current meeting date. Where possible, items scheduled for the October and December meetings had been placed on the agenda for the current meeting. However, some items remained outstanding and would need to be re-scheduled and/or dealt with in a different way.

In particular, it was proposed that the matter of an induction pack for new independent members be dealt with by enabling the Committee to review the Members' Handbook already in preparation under the auspices of the Member Development Steering Group. With regard the monitoring of the Member-Officer Protocol, the priority now was to agree a training programme to support the introduction of the Protocol. With regard to joint standards committees, it was clear that the North Yorkshire Police now intended to pursue a joint committee across all the Yorkshire police authorities. However, enquiries could still be pursued with the Fire Authority or other local authorities, if Members so wished.

RESOLVED: (i) That a report on the review of the Planning Code of Good Practice be received at the meeting in January 2010.¹

(ii) That the Committee review the proposed Members' Handbook to ensure that it contains appropriate material for members of the Standards Committee.²

(iii) That the Member training session on Member / Officer relationships arranged for 17 February 2010 be used to launch, and provide training on, the new Member / Officer Protocol.³

(iv) That a report be received at a future meeting examining how joint committees are working in other parts of the country.⁴

REASON: To take forward the Committee's work programme.

Action Required

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| 1. Prepare report on Planning Code of Practice for meeting on 22/01/10 | AL |
| 2. Make arrangements to involve Standards Committee in consultation on Member Handbook | AEO |
| 3. Ensure that training session on 17 February includes new Member / Officer Protocol | AEO |
| 4. Schedule report on joint committees on work plan for a suitable meeting date | FY |

28. REVIEW OF WORK PLAN

Members reviewed the Standards Committee' work plan for the 2009/10 Municipal Year, in the light of the updated information provided in the previous item.

With regard to item on Substitutes for Standards Committees, previously scheduled for the meeting on 23 October 2009, it was noted that a report was no longer required but that substitute members should be encouraged to attend training sessions and Committee meetings in order to gain experience on Standards issues.

RESOLVED: (i) That the draft work plan for 2009/10 circulated with the agenda be approved, subject to the following amendments:

a) Meeting on 18 December 2009

This meeting has been cancelled

b) Meeting on 22 January 2010

Add:

- Report on complaints pre-hearing and hearing procedures
- Review of Planning Code of Good Practice (if sufficient progress has been made on this review)

(ii) That a report on the results of the Monitoring Officer's enquiries regarding joint committees be scheduled on next year's work plan, for the meeting in June 2010.

REASON: To reflect the changes agreed at the meeting and to ensure an organised programme of work for the Committee.

29. CHAIR'S REMARKS

a) Independent Members' Forum

The Chair announced that, it had been suggested at this year's Independent Members' Forum that the next Forum should take place in York. The Forum covered the Yorkshire and Humber area and normally attracted about 20 to 25 delegates.

Having discussed the practicalities of hosting this event, it was

RESOLVED: That York be agreed as the venue for the next meeting of the Independent Members' Forum, in October 2010.

b) Standards for England Conference

At Members' request, the Chair provided a brief verbal update on the Standards for England conference, which had taken place the previous month at the Birmingham Conference Centre.

The conference had been attended by Mrs Bainton, Councillor Horton and Mr Hall. All had been very impressed by the venue and organisation of the conference and had found it useful and constructive.

PART B - MATTERS REFERRED TO COUNCIL

30. MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Members considered a report which presented a proposed Member Training and Development Policy, produced in consultation with the Member Development Steering Group.

The draft Policy, attached as Annex A to the report, aimed to provide a clear direction and purpose with regard to the provision of training and development opportunities for York's elected Members. Mike Leitch, representative of Local Government Yorkshire and Humber, had assisted in its drafting and had confirmed that it would meet the criteria required to achieve I&DeA Charter status.

The Committee commented that the draft Policy appeared to be very focused upon elected Members and suggested that this be addressed by ensuring that the term 'Members' was clearly defined in the introduction to the Policy as including co-opted and independent members of council bodies.

RECOMMENDED: That Council adopt the draft Member Training and Development Policy, subject to the amendment referred to above.

REASON: In order to comply with the requirements of the I&DeA Charter.

C Bainton, Chair

[The meeting started at 3.00 pm and finished at 3.55 pm].