



# Minutes

Name of meeting	<b>ETHICAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>
Date and time	<b>MONDAY, 17 JANUARY 2011 COMMENCING AT 6.00 PM</b>
Venue	<b>COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT</b>
Present	<u>Independent Members:</u>  Mr Mark Southwell (Chairman), Mr Anthony Brindle, Mr Keith Fagan, Ms Liz Mackenzie, Mr Ray Smith, Mr Peter Tautz  <u>Representative of Town and Parish Councils:</u>  Mr Richard Day, Mr Ron Mew, Mr Denis Russell, Mr John Ward  <u>Isle of Wight Council Members :</u>  Cllrs John Howe, Susan Scoccia, David Williams
Officers Present	Davina Fiore, Julie Martin, Chris Mathews, Helen Miles
Apologies	Mr George Hibberd, Cllr Heather Humby

---

15. [Minutes](#)

RESOLVED :

THAT the Minutes of the meeting held on [25 October 2010](#) be confirmed.

16. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations received at this stage.

17. [Update from the Chairman](#)

The Chairman advised he had resumed his quarterly meetings with the Leader and the Chief Executive; the vice chairman would also be invited to attend those meetings.

The Annual report was to be added to the workplan.

## 18. Reports of the Director of Corporate Services

### (a) [Changes to Assessment Sub Committee Process](#)

Members were reminded that Assessment Sub Committee's were set up on receipt of a complaint, which was resource intensive. This had, however, gained councillors confidence.

Unfortunately, due to budget pressures the council was no longer able to deal with on demand meetings. It was suggested that a monthly Assessment Sub Committee be scheduled which would deal with any complaints that had been received during that month.

It was suggested that, to avoid having a situation where one member had a conflict of interest and could not take part in the assessment of a particular complaint, the meetings would be set up in advance with four members in attendance. At least two of whom would be independent members with one Town and Parish Council member and one Isle of Wight Council member.

Members asked if there was to be a cut off date with regard to complaints being heard in a given month and were advised this was unlikely as a long lead in time was not needed for this particular sub committee.

#### RESOLVED :

THAT the Assessment Sub Committee meets on a monthly basis.

### (b) [The Localism Bill and the Future](#)

The Committee was informed that as part of the Localism Bill the current ethical standards regime was to be abolished, although the Bill still had to go through the parliamentary process. However Authorities will be able to establish their own Codes of Conducts and complaints process – but with no statutory sanctions.

Locally, it had been indicated by leading councillors that the Council would like a code of conduct in some form, but it needed to be simpler than the present one. It was anticipated that the bar to referring a complaint for investigation would be set higher than it was at the moment. If a voluntary code of conduct were to be agreed by full council then it was anticipated that all members should comply with it.

A question was raised regarding Town and Parish Councils in relation to a voluntary code of conduct. This would be a matter for each Town or Parish Council to consider, and if they wished to adopt a voluntary code, it would be self enforced by each Town or Parish Council.

There was some discussion around the possibility of amalgamating standards issues with those of the Audit Committee to look at

governance issues. If that was the case there were a number of models that could be adopted.

RESOLVED :

THAT the report be noted.

(c) [Initial Assessment Review and Report Back](#)

The Monitoring Officer indicated that the number of complaints was falling. There had been 30 sent for investigation, not 28 as stated in the report.

17 investigations had been completed with 13 still ongoing. It was noted that some investigations had taken longer than the hoped for six months to complete. The Monitoring Officer indicated that she had not received any additional resources to undertake this work which had to be done alongside the investigating officer's normal job. There was some discussion around the standard of reports arising from the investigations.

RESOLVED :

- (i) THAT the committee was satisfied with the action taken in respect of ESC.107.10.
- (ii) THAT the report be noted.

19. **Updates from Monitoring Officer**

The Monitoring Officer had nothing further to report.

20. **Workplan**

Members noted that the Annual report should be added to the April 2011 meeting of the workplan.

CHAIRMAN