



Minutes

Name of meeting	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Date and time	MONDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2007 COMMENCING AT 6.00PM
Venue	COMMITTEE ROOM ONE, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	<u>Independent Members:</u> Mr M Southwell (Chairman), Capt A Brindle, Mr K Fagan, Mr G Hibberd, Mr P Tautz, Mrs S Tudor Smith <u>Representative of Town and Parish Councils:</u> Mr D Russell, Mr R Mew (1 st Deputy), Mr R Day (2 nd Deputy) <u>Isle of Wight Council Members :</u> Cllrs Muriel Miller, Erica Oulton
Officers Present	Alison Lowton, Chris Mathews, Paul Thistlewood
Apologies	Mr B Claxton, Cllr Mike Cunningham, Cllr Heather Humby

22. **Minutes**

RESOLVED :

THAT the Minutes of the meeting held on [17 September 2007](#) be confirmed.

23. **Declarations of Interest**

Mr R Day declared a prejudicial interest in minute 30 as he was a close associate of the member concerned.

24. **Update from the Chairman**

The Chairman congratulated Mr Mathews on being appointed as the Council's Monitoring Officer. He also reported that the Clerk to Sandown Town Council had been successful in obtaining her qualification.

The Chairman reported that Mr Fagan had spent time acquiring some background knowledge of the Council's planning processes. Mr Fagan

indicated that he had been impressed with the professionalism of the officers involved and the support given to them by the Chief Executive.

Members were told that the Chairman had received a letter from the Northwood House Charitable Trust raising concerns about the Council's future involvement with the property. There were no ethical issues requiring the attention of the Committee.

Reference was also made to the attendance of members of the Committee at meetings of Town and Parish Councils. Members discussed a process whereby the good work being undertaken by Councils could be acknowledged following such an attendance. It was thought appropriate for the Chairman, when made aware of instances of good work, to send a letter to the Council concerned.

The Chairman also indicated that it would be the Alison Lowton's last meeting and thanked her on behalf of the Committee for all her work as Interim Director of Legal and Democratic Services.

RESOLVED

THAT the Chairman write to a Town or Parish Council following the attendance of any member of the Committee to acknowledge instances of good practice.

25. **Reports of the Interim Director of Legal and Democratic Services**

(a) Ethical Audit Action Plan

Members were reminded of the ethical governance health check undertaken by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) during February 2007. The report arising from this was considered by the Committee at its 16 July 2007 meeting. Members had requested that an Action Plan be drafted on the key themes for improvement identified by the I&DeA.

The Interim Director of Legal and Democratic Services outlined the range of actions proposed together with target dates. The Committee would be kept advised of progress with the action plan. It was indicated that the proposed revision to arrangements for the Scrutiny and Audit Committees would now be considered by the full Council at a special meeting in December.

Within the Action Plan was also a change in the name of the Committee to the Ethical Standards Committee. This would be considered by full Council on 23 January 2008.

RESOLVED :

THAT the full Council be recommended to adopt the Ethical Governance Audit Action Plan.

(b) Elected Member Development Programme

The Committee was informed of the work being undertaken by the Elected Member Development Group. The Group dealt with aspects of learning and development for members. Councillor Miller was the Chairman of the Group and gave a brief summary of its work.

An assessment by the South East Employers would take place on 17 December 2007. This would ascertain if the Council would be awarded a Charter for Member Development.

RESOLVED :

THAT the report be noted.

(c) The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

The Monitoring Officer reported that the Act had received Royal Assent at the end of October 2007 with various provisions dealing with local hearings and filtering having effect from 1 April 2008. Detailed guidance of the mechanisms was awaited. The Committee would be kept updated once this had been received.

RESOLVED :

THAT the report be noted.

(d) Feedback from the Annual Conference in Birmingham

Members were advised on a range of aspects arising from the annual conference of the Standards Board. Many of these had been reflected in the Ethical Governance Audit Action Plan considered earlier in the meeting. All the relevant paperwork was available on the Board's website.

Closer working arrangements between the Council's Standards, Scrutiny and Audit Committees were being looked at as was partnership arrangements with other authorities such as Hampshire Police and the Primary Care Trust.

RESOLVED :

THAT the report be noted.

(e) Feedback on Training on Code of Conduct

The Committee received feedback from the training provided by the Council on the Code of Conduct. Sessions had been held for Isle of Wight Councillors and Parish and Town Councils.

The content of each session was amended to take into account issues brought up at a previous session. Areas that attracted the

most questions related to prejudicial interests, confidentiality and freedom of information.

Discussion took place on what action could be taken with those members that had not attended any of the training sessions. It was not mandatory nor part of the Quality Parish status requirements. It would be impractical for training to be provided for all members of the Isle of Wight Council and all Town and Parish Councils following the period between elections and the 28 day period given for the signing of the Code of Conduct acceptance form.

The Monitoring Officer was requested to send those Isle of Wight Councillors who had not attended the training a copy of the training pack.

It was suggested that it might be beneficial if those Town and Parish Councils where there had been low attendance, and those where there were known difficulties, to be targeted for attendance by a member of the Committee.

The Committee also believed that the positive benefits of attending code of conduct training should be emphasised. Additionally special efforts should be made with any new member to encourage participation.

RESOLVED :

THAT the report be noted.

26. **Workplan**

The Committee was made aware of specific items that would be considered at future meetings in addition to the normal standing items. The Ethical Governance Audit Action Plan would also be included in the workplan as a standing item.

RESOLVED

THAT the workplan be noted.

27. **Updates from Monitoring Officer**

The Monitoring Officer said that there were two issues that he wished to report but these would have to be taken following the exclusion of the public and press.

28. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

THAT under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that there was likely to be disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 3 and 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as Amended) of the

Act and in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

29. **Confidential Updates from Monitoring Officer**

The Monitoring Officer advised the Committee on two separate non Isle of Wight Council issues (case SC4/07P and SC5/07P) that he would be undertaking initial work on.

The Chairman also reported on a meeting that he and Mr Fagan had attended with two Isle of Wight Councillors relating to issues connected with case SC1/07.

(Prior to the following item Mr R Day, who had declared a prejudicial interest as he was a close associate of the member concerned, left the meeting)

30. **Investigation Report**

SC 02/07 – Investigation Report

The Committee considered the confidential report of the Monitoring Officer arising from the investigations that he had been requested to carry out at the previous meeting. Both the elected member and the organisation involved had seen the report and were aware of the contents and recommendations. The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee of a further communication that he had received that day from a representative of the organisation.

The legal position was fully explained together with the action that was available to the Committee. The Committee could only deal with issues connected with the ten general principles of public life.

RESOLVED :

- (a) THAT given the seriousness of the matter the report of the Monitoring Officer be referred to the Conservative Group Leader with a recommendation that the member involved be asked to resign from office and if this is not forthcoming then he should be expelled from the Group.
- (b) THAT the evidence and associated material collected during the investigation be passed onto the Police.

CHAIRMAN