

# STANDARDS COMMITTEE

## —Minutes—

**30 JULY 2007**

**Members Present:**

Mr. Steven Moussavi (Chairman)  
Mr. Christopher Troke  
Grace Moody-Stuart  
Councillor Nicholas Botterill (from 7.25pm)  
Councillor Donald Johnson  
Councillor Lisa Homan

**Officers in attendance:**

Lesley Courcouf, ACE & Monitoring Officer  
Michael Cogher, Head of Legal Services & Deputy MO  
Kayode Adewumi, Head of Councillors' Services  
John Cheong, Principal Committee Co-ordinator

**ITEM**

**ACTION**

**PREAMBLE**

Mr. Moussavi took the Chair for the 2007/08 Municipal Year in lieu of Mrs. Grace Moody-Stuart, and as agreed by the Annual Council Meeting. He thanked his predecessor, Mr. Christopher Troke, for ably chairing the Committee over the past municipal year, and reminded members of the Committee's purpose and responsibilities, especially in the light of the newly devolved local powers of investigation and adjudication.

- Item 1 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS  
COMMITTEE HELD ON Y 26 MARCH 2007**

**RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2007 be agreed and signed as an accurate record.

**ACE/JPC to note**

- Item 2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Nicholas Botterill

**ACE/JPC to note**

Item 3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by members of the Committee at this meeting.

Item 4 THE NEW MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT – MAY 2007

The Head of Legal Services, Michael Cogher, introduced the item and a powerpoint presentation on the New Members' Code of Conduct from the Standards Board for England. The Code had come into force on 3 May 2007 and had been adopted by the Council at its Annual Council Meeting on 30 May 2007.

The Chairman, Mr. Moussavi, suggested that it would be helpful if the Committee receive the complementary DVD training video compiled by the Standards Board at its next meeting in October, if it was available.

**ACE/JPC to  
action**

Councillor Homan enquired whether the Head of Legal Services had received a large number of requests for advice relating to the Code since its introduction. HLS confirmed that he had received a regular number of requests, mostly in relation to Planning and Licensing issues. It was anticipated that, as a result of changes in the Code, new requests would be forthcoming on issues such as disclosure of confidential information in the public interest

**RESOLVED:** That the powerpoint presentation on the new Members' Code of Conduct be noted.

Item 5 STANDARDS COMMITTEE ARTICLE FOR HFM

The Committee received for comment an edited version of an article written by the past Chairman, Mr. Troke, for the Borough newspaper.

Mr. Moussavi commented that the quotations attributed to both himself and Mr. Troke were repetitious and needed to be revised. He also thought the number of complaints received by the Standards Board in 2006/7 needed to be clearly distinguished from the very low number of complaints actually received by LBHF.

The Committee also felt that the proposed headline "New Code to counter Councillor corruption" was misleading, as it seemed to imply that this had been an issue before, when clearly that was not the case. It was suggested that this be replaced with something more appropriate. It was also suggested by Councillor Johnson that more of Mr. Troke's original article be retained, perhaps as a Q&A box to one side.

Councillor Botterill suggested the fact that LBHF had an enviable record compared to other neighbouring Boroughs ought to be emphasised, although other members felt this might prove counter-productive, by inviting complaints to be made.

Councillor Johnson also suggested the article needed to emphasise clearly that the Standards Committee did not deal with or consider ordinary council complaints, only those in relation to ethical matters and the Code of Conduct, as there was a real danger the public would misunderstand the function of the Committee unless the HFM article was very carefully worded.

Members agreed that ACE (Lesley Courcouf) and the Acting Head of Press Office (Louise Raisey) be delegated to amend the article appropriately for publication in a forthcoming issue of the Borough newspaper.

**ACE/ LC &  
Press Office/LR  
to liaise and  
redraft**

**RESOLVED:** Accordingly.

Item 6     **STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

Members discussed the possibility of using web surveys and other online training tools to test members' understanding of the Code, and to gain feedback on members' training needs.

The Head of Councillors' Services, Kayode Adewumi, informed the Committee that his previous authority (Camden) utilised an online training programme called "Modern Councillors", devised by the IDeA, which the Committee might be interested in trying.

Mr.Moussavi asked whether an online training programme could be devised of about 15 questions, based on the SBfE powerpoint. This suggestion was supported by Grace Moody-Stuart, who suggested multiple-choice answers with a feedback loop could be used to ensure members fully completed the course.

It was requested that officers investigate the feasibility of this method of training with IT and bring back a draft to the October meeting for the Committee to try out before it was published more widely.

**HLS/ MC & HCS/  
KA to liaise and  
action with IT**

Item 7     **INFORMATION ITEM – LOCAL GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH BILL**

Noted report tabled at the meeting and circulated previously to members by e-mail.

The Head of Legal Services, Michael Cogher, outlined briefly

- Standards Committee -

the provisions of the clauses in the proposed Bill and how this would impact on the work of the Standards Committee in future. The effect would mostly be felt if the number of cases being referred for investigation from the Standards Board were to increase, although indicators so far showed that this was unlikely.

HLS reported that at present there was little enthusiasm among other WLA Boroughs for joint working. The situation was however fluid, and once the Standards Committee local filters were in place, could change. It was suggested the Committee keep joint working proposals under careful review, as there was a danger of being drawn in to undertake investigations in other local authorities, while they would not be called on to reciprocate, due to the low numbers of LBHF complaints.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee note the report and receive a further report, together with detailed recommendations, once the Bill receives Royal Assent.

**HLS/ MC to  
action**

Item 8 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- It was agreed by the Committee that Mr. Troke be nominated as the Committee's second delegate to the Standards Committees Annual Conference to be held in Birmingham on 15 & 16 October.
- Mr. Moussavi suggested that LBHF offer to "host" the next WLA joint Standards Committees discussion meeting (Brent, as lead member, to organise and invite SBfE speaker), and to extend the invitation to our partner Boroughs RBKC, Wandsworth & Westminster as well.

**ACE/JPC to  
make booking  
arrangements**

**HLS/MC &  
ACE/JPC to  
investigate  
feasibility &  
make suitable  
arrangements**

Meeting began : 7:00 pm  
Meeting ended : 8:18 pm

CHAIR.....