



STANDARDS COMMITTEE —Minutes—

24 NOVEMBER 2008

Members Present:

Mr. Christopher Troke (Chairman)
Mrs. Joyce Epstein
Mr. Steven Moussavi
Ms Grace Moody-Stuart
Councillor Nicholas Botterill
Councillor Stephen Cowan
Councillor Lisa Homan
Councillor Donald Johnson

Officers in attendance:

Kayode Adewumi, Head of Councillors' Services
Michael Cogher, Assistant Director (Legal & Democratic Services)
David Bays, Committee Co-ordinator

ITEM

ACTION

**1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS
COMMITTEE HELD ON 2 JUNE 2008**

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2008 be agreed and signed as an accurate record.

KA/DB to note

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Alford and for late arrival from Councillors Botterill and Cowan.

ACE/KA/DB to note

3 **RESIGNATION OF MEMBER**

The Committee received a report on Miss Onwere's resignation, following her appointment as a legal adviser with another authority. They also considered the implications for the Council, bearing in mind that at the time of her appointment the Council were only seeking the appointment of 1 additional Member but the Standards Committee Appointment Panel had recommended to the Council both her name and that of Mrs Joyce Epstein as new Members.

RESOLVED - That the resignation of Miss Oluchi Onwere be noted and that no further action be taken to recruit a replacement for her as an Independent Member for the time being.

4 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

5 **CONSULTATION PAPER ON CODE OF CONDUCT**

MC

The Committee considered the Government's proposals for revising the Model Code of Conduct, the Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001 and the introduction of a Model Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees. A draft response was also attached to the agenda.

On the definition of "criminal offence", Members wished to see this confined to serious offences such as assault, harassment, fraud and child pornography offences; trivial offences such as police cautions would therefore be excluded. It was agreed that the definition proposed should be offences of violence, dishonesty and sexual offences.

On the time limit for Members undertaking to observe the Code, the Committee suggested this be 2 months from the date of the Members being notified rather than 2 months from the date of adoption of the Code.

On the issue raised in the paper about imposing the Code on all employees, including those subject to a separate professional code, the Committee favoured a response which would include a suggestion that other professional bodies should bring their Codes in line with those for local authorities.

On the two-tier model being proposed for selecting “qualifying employees”, the Committee favoured the “political restriction” model of the 1989 Act.

On the issue as to whether qualifying employees should publicly register their interests, the Committee agreed that they should and that those matters requiring registration on the employees’ code should be consistent with those applying to members.

With the exception of the above comments, the Committee agreed with the suggested responses set out in the report.

Resolved – That the suggested comments on the Government’s consultation as amended by the above be forwarded to the Department for Communities and Local Government as the Council’s response.

6 LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS

Resolved - That the Committee note the report on activity so far during 2008-09 on discharging the Committee’s new role in dealing with complaints against members together with recent guidance issued by the Adjudication Panel about accepting references from Standards Committees.

7 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES

Mrs Joyce Epstein reported on her attendance at the Annual Assembly. She felt that most Standards Committees were trying to find a role. It seemed many were trying to broaden their remits to cover issues such as audit, monitoring ombudsman complaints, fraud, training as well as the investigation of complaints. The Committee discussed whether, in the light of experiences in other authorities, it should be more pro-active in other areas. It noted that its activities over the past 12 months had included local assessment of complaints, suggesting and initiating training, publicising the Standards Board DVD, distributing the Code Quiz to all Members, together with the publicity in the local press and on the website about the local assessment of complaints. These were sufficient for the Council’s needs at present. However, the Committee asked Mrs Epstein to circulate a note on her thoughts on the Assembly for future consideration.

Resolved - That the report be noted and Mrs Epstein be thanked for her attendance at the Assembly and circulate a note on her thoughts on conference for future consideration.

8 ANNUAL NORTH WEST LONDON STANDARDS SEMINAR

The Committee noted that this year's event would be held at Brent Town Hall on 27 January 2009 and would be addressed by James Goudie, QC.

Resolved - That the Chairman and appropriate officers attend the forthcoming Seminar. **KA/DB**

9 WORK PROGRAMME.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted and agreed. **ALL**

Meeting began : 7:00 pm
Meeting ended : 8.40 pm

CHAIRMAN.....