



London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Standards Committee Minutes

Wednesday 4 November 2009

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Adronie Alford, Stephen Cowan and Lisa Homan

Independent members: Steven Moussavi (Chairman), Joyce Epstein, Grace Moody-Stuart and Christopher Troke

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

1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2009 be confirmed and signed as an accurate record of the proceedings.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

3. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

All Members declared a personal interest in that their Allowances and Amounts Paid to each Member under the Allowances Scheme were set out in Item 8.

4. **'THAT'S A WRAP' DVD**

The Committee viewed the Standards for England DVD "Assessment Made Clear", designed to help Standards Committee Members assess complaints about elected or co-opted Members.

RESOLVED :

That Party Groups be encouraged to show the DVD at one of their Group meetings.

5. **ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES 2009**

The Committee received reports from the Chairman and Christopher Troke on their attendance at the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees in Birmingham on 12-13 October 2009. Mr. Troke had attended in place of Councillor Alford. Their report highlighted possible ways of raising the profile of the Committee within the Council, including making the Standards Committee content on the website more prominent, attendance by Standards Committee Members at Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee meetings and more publicity through H&F News.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that agendas for all these meetings were published on the website and encouraged Standards Committee members to attend any of these they wished.

RESOLVED THAT:

Areas for further work arising from the suggestions set out above be further discussed under Item 12 (Work Programme).

6. WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Following a request at a previous meeting, the Committee received a copy of the Whistleblowing Policy adopted by the Council in 1999. The Committee noted that the policy was very infrequently used. The Monitoring Officer had had no complaints made under the policy since 2005. In the longer term there were plans to review the policy and similar HR policies but no changes were currently being proposed although some detailed changes might be made to take account of departments being re-organised within the Council. In the meantime, the Monitoring Officer suggested discussions with the Council's Anti-Fraud service might be useful in re-branding this policy, taking account also of other best practice in the public sector.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Monitoring Officer discuss the Whistleblowing Policy with the Council's Anti-Fraud Service and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services with a view to reporting back to the Committee at a future meeting on a possible review of the policy.

7. LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS

The Committee noted only one local complaint case had been considered during 2008-09 and none so far during 2009-10.

The Committee also received a report proposing that a Member of the Committee be co-opted to the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea's Standards Committee, as required, to assist them with local complaints.

RESOLVED THAT:

That Mr. Christopher Troke be co-opted to the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea's Standards Committee and the arrangements for his co-option, as set out in the agenda, be approved.

8. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

All Members declared a personal interest in that their Allowances and Amounts Paid to each Member under the Allowances Scheme were set out in this item.

The Committee noted that these reports had been submitted following a request at the June meeting that an Annual Report on this issue should be presented to the Standards Committee. Similar reports would be presented to the Committee each year.

9. DISPENSATION GUIDANCE

The Committee received a report enclosing recent guidance issued by Standards for England following the Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Order 2009. The new guidance corrected an anomaly in the previous regulations.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that although there had been several requests for Dispensations in 2005, there had been none since.

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be received and that, as to the criteria to apply in considering requests for dispensations in the future, each case be considered on its merits.

10. PROBITY IN PLANNING

The Committee received a report on recent Guidance issued by the Local Government Association about a revised code of conduct for Members in relation to Planning. The Guidance complemented and updated the Council's own "Guidance for Councillors and officers dealing with Planning and Licensing", as set out in pages 510-520 of the Council's Constitution.

RESOLVED THAT:

The revised LGA Guidance be noted and Members of the Planning Applications Committee be informed of the changes.

11. JOINT STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING WITH THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

The Committee received a report on proposed arrangements for the joint meeting with the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea's Standards Committee at Hammersmith Town Hall on 3 December 2009.

RESOLVED THAT:

The arrangements be agreed, as set out in the report, and that a reminder be sent to Members and officers concerned.

12. STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted proposed items for its Work Programme for the remainder of 2009-10. Following the earlier discussion under Item 5 (Annual Assembly), the Committee agreed that there was scope for the Committee to take some extra steps to improve its profile and standing amongst other Standards Committees, particularly in making the Standards Committee information on the Council's web page more prominent and in securing more press coverage of its work.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Committee pursue the suggestions outlined above and accept Mr. Troke's offer to propose some changes to the web pages based on practice in other comparable authorities.

13. PROPOSED GLA SEMINAR

The Chairman mentioned a proposal from the Chairman of the GLA's Standards Committee to hold a Seminar at City Hall in January 2010 for all London authorities to exchange best practice.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Committee support the proposal and circulate details of the event once details have been finalised.

Meeting started: 7pm
Meeting ended: 8.50 pm

Chairman

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