

## Standards Committee



Date	8 May 2008
Venue	Town Hall, St Annes
Committee members	Mr DDE Birchall (Chairman)  Councillors Brenda Ackers, Paul Hayhurst, Howard Henshaw A D K (Malaysia), Kevin Eastham, Mr A Marsh, Mr H Butler and Linda Burn
Others	Richard Nulty
Officers	Ian Curtis, Clare Holmes, Hazel Wood

### 1. Declarations of interest

Members were reminded that any personal/prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct adopted in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000.

### 2. Substitute members

There were no substitute members.

### 3. Council Meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2008

Members considered the criticisms that had been made of the way in which certain aspects of the council meeting on 3 March was conducted. The committee considered the context of the meeting in the light of those criticisms.

Several points were raised by the committee including the view that the meeting had been badly organised; poor chairmanship; lack of support from the Chief Executive for the Mayor, demographics: lack of control of the public; the general conduct of councillors and the need for officers responsible for the meeting to clear the public gallery.

After discussion, the committee RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY for the chairman of the standards committee to write a letter to the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council and Leaders of the political groups expressing the committee's extreme disappointment including all points raised on how the council meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March was conducted.

### 4. Local Assessment Criteria And Publicity Arrangements

Ian Curtis (Monitoring Officer) introduced a report on the new regulations that were now in force giving local standards committee the responsibility to assess complaints and decide whether to refer them for investigation. The committee was required to put in place procedures setting out how complaints should be made and how they would be dealt with.

The procedures had take into account guidance by the Standards Board. Since the guidance had not yet been issued, the committee was asked to make the interim arrangements detailed in the report.

The committee RESOLVED:

1. To authorise the monitoring officer to take the steps required to comply with regulations 10(1) and (2) of the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008, which deal with addresses for complaints, and publicising how to complain.
2. Adopt the criteria in the appendix for the purposes of regulation 10(3), which deals with the procedures to be followed in relation to allegations.
3. Review both of the above matters as soon as practicable after guidance from the Standards Board for England is available.
5. New Responsibilities for the Standards Committee

Ian Curtis (Monitoring Officer) presented a report on the new regulations and guidance which have made changes to the way in which the Standards Committee would operate. The main change was that the committee would become responsible for the initial assessment of whether a complaint about the conduct of a councillor should be referred for investigation.

Members discussed the changes needed to the committee structure and other matters arising from the changes which were set out in the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Standards Committee forms three sub-committees, one to deal with initial assessment decisions, one to take decisions on reviews and one to conduct hearings following investigations. Each sub-committee would have a floating membership drawn at random (subject to availability and conflicts of interests) according to the following criteria:
  - Initial assessment: Five members, comprising at least one independent person, who would act as chairman, and at least one parish member
  - Review: Three members comprising at least one independent person, who would act as chairman, and, at least one parish member.

- Hearings: Three members comprising at least one independent person, who would act as chairman, and, at least one parish member.

2. Note the remainder of the report.

6. Complaints to the Standards Board: Statistics

The monitoring officer presented a statistical analysis of complaints made to the Standards Board for England about members of Fylde Borough Council and parish councils within Fylde since the date of the last meeting. There had been two complaints to the Standards Board about three borough or parish councillors since the last meeting of the committee. None of these had been referred for investigation.

The committee RESOLVED to note the report.