

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
23<sup>RD</sup> MARCH 2010

SUBMITTED TO THE COUNCIL MEETING – 20<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2010

(To be read in conjunction with the Agenda for the Meeting)

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|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| * Mr David Wheatley (Chairman)     | Cllr Mrs Carole King    |
| Cllr Michael Goodridge             | * Cllr Mrs Janet Maines |
| Mr Nicholas Davies (Vice-Chairman) | * Cllr Nick Morris      |
| * Cllr Victor Duckett              | * Cllr David Munro      |
| * Cllr Tony Gordon-Smith           | Cllr John Savage        |
| * Ms Karen Heenan                  | Cllr Richard Terry      |
- \*Present

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Nicholas Davies and Councillors Michael Goodridge, Richard Terry and Carole King.

19. MINUTES (Agenda Item 3)

The Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2009 were confirmed and signed.

20. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (Agenda Item 4)

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**PART I – RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL**

21. PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE – GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS (Agenda Item 10, Appendix D)

- 21.1 Partnership working is now a very common occurrence, and is relatively new. The Government has been encouraging local authorities to work with other public, private and voluntary sector organisations to achieve commonly held aims and priorities. This brings about a new set of considerations, and can take members outside their "comfort zones", and they have to adapt their approach and behaviour accordingly.
- 21.2 Members will adapt in different ways, and some will be more successful than others. It is with this background that the attached guidance at Annexe 1 has been prepared to assist members in understanding the issues involved and the considerations they need to bear in mind when meeting with or otherwise dealing with partner organisations.

Standards 12  
23.03.10

- 21.3 The guidance also includes a section to assist those members who are nominated by the Council to be the Council's representative on the committees of other organisations (typically community or voluntary organisations).
- 21.4 Strengthening the governance of partnerships has been identified as an area for improvement under an assessment of achievement against the Council's Code of Corporate Governance. The guidance would also form an insertion for inclusion in Waverley's Partnership Governance Framework. It is suggested that the guidance should be issued to all members of Waverley and will supplement the Council's Code of Conduct
- 21.5 The Standards Committee was invited to comment on the draft guidance attached at Annexe 1 and It is now presented to Council to adopt as a supplement to the Code of Conduct. In so doing, the chairman may care to draw the Council's attention to the item and its importance as the Committee also agreed, as part of its Forward Programme, that the Chairman should be able to make comments when presenting the Committee's minutes to Council in order to ensure Members understood what is being proposed and its importance.
- 21.6 Provision of guidance to members on their roles and conduct in partnership working would aid understanding and contribute to smooth working relationships with partners. The Committee's consideration and recommendation of the attached draft to the Council would be a clear demonstration of the Committee's interest in ensuring there are clear and consistent standards of conduct.

The Standards Committee accordingly

**RECOMMENDS that**

1. **the Council adopts the "Partnership Governance – Guidance to Members" as a supplement to the Code of Conduct.**

**PARTS II AND III – MATTERS OF REPORT**

Background Papers

The background papers relating to the following reports in Parts II and III are as specified in the Agenda for the meeting of the Standards Committee.

**Part II – Matters reported in detail for the information of the Council**

22. COUNCILLORS' IT ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY (Agenda Item 7, Appendix A)
- 22.1 The Committee received the proposed Councillors' IT Acceptable Use Policy relating to the use of IT Facilities to consider. Members were advised that the

document had been discussed by the Councillors IT Focus Group and was closely

aligned to the Staff Acceptable Use Policy. Comments from the Committee, as well as the Audit Committee, would be considered by the Executive at its meeting in April.

- 22.2 The Committee considered the Policy and raised a number of minor corrections and amendments to the document. In particular, clarification was included about the use of the Council email addresses during the Purdah period as well as protecting information sent to personal computers not just Waverley systems. Members also felt that Councillors should be encouraged to use 'strong' passwords for all IT-based systems, should set up personalised signatures on Council emails and avoid printing documents unless absolutely necessary.
- 22.3 The Committee noted that following its comments and those received from the Audit Committee, the document would be amended and then considered by the Executive at its meeting in April.
- 22.4 The Committee RESOLVED that subject to the amendments raised at the meeting, the Councillors IT Acceptable Use Policy, be recommended to the Executive for approval.

### **Part III – Brief summaries of other matters dealt with**

#### **23. MONITORING OFFICER UPDATE (Agenda Item 6)**

- 23.1 The Committee was advised that the provisional programme for the Standards for England Conference had been published and Members were asked whether or not they would like to attend. Members questioned the budget available for this and suggested that they might attend just one rather than two days. Officers would circulate more information once it was available and verify the budget allocation for training. Places would be booked in advance, and Members interested in attending should contact the Monitoring Officer.
- 23.2 The Committee noted that Standards for England had announced a consultation on a new risk based approach to their work. It intends to prioritise the way it interacts with authorities on the basis of a risk assessment of the likelihood and impact of any failure of standards in that authority. Further information would be made available in due course, and the Committee agreed that any consultation received by the Council should be met with a robust response.
- 23.3 The Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that he had received a number questions from Members and given appropriate advice over the last period. He also confirmed that, following a meeting of the Consideration Sub-Committee, Members had received the investigation report and agreed not to take any further action on the complaint against the Parish Councillor.

Standards 14

23.03.10

23.4 The Monitoring Officer also advised that it was unlikely that any amendments to the Code of Conduct would be made ahead of the General Election. This had been notified on a recent one-day update conference.

24. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8, Appendix B)

24.1 Following the last meeting when it was agreed that proposals for a forward programme should be brought back to the Committee, Members received a report containing a range of suggestions to consider and adopt as part of the Committee's Forward Programme.

24.2 The Committee considered the proposals and agreed, in particular, that they should look at developing links and information flows with the Town and Parish Councils. Members agreed that the Council should be proactive in training and offering advice to Town and Parish Councillors/Clerks and the Standards Committee should look into ways to develop these links. Members also agreed that they should be more proactive in raising the profile of the Standards Committee and make more information available electronically on the Website. However, Members felt quite strongly that there did not need to be greater publicity of the complaints process or Hearings.

24.3 The Committee agreed that it should not look to survey residents to gauge how they viewed their local councillors and the Council from the perspective of ethical decision-making and conduct of decision making. However, Members suggested that officers might want to look into surveying those involved in the complaints process.

24.4 The Committee RESOLVED that, subject to the amendments raised at the meeting, the forward work programme for 2010/11 be adopted.

25. STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND ANNUAL RETURN (Agenda Item 9, Appendix C)

25.1 The Committee was advised that the Standards for England introduced an annual return in 2009, and for 2010, it had given more advance notice of its contents, to enable it to be shared with the Standards Committee before finalising the answers. Members received the guidance notes and draft responses to the questions for consideration.

25.2 The Committee considered the draft response to the Standards for England Annual Return and agreed that this should be looked at in more detail and circulated following the meeting for comment. Councillor Tony Gordon-Smith agreed to work with the Monitoring Officer in formalising the Council's responses to the Annual Return .

**The meeting commenced at 7pm and concluded at 8.30pm**

**Chairman**