

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

5.00pm 10 JUNE 2008

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors: Carden, Drake, Fallon-Khan, Lepper, Steedman and Watkins

Independent Members: Dr M Wilkinson (Chairman),

Rottingdean Parish Council Representatives: Mr J C Janse van Vuuren

Apologies: Ms M Carter (Independent Member), Mrs H Scott (Independent Member) and Mr G W Rhodes (Rottingdean Parish Council)

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1A. Declarations of Substitutes

1.1 There were none.

1B. Declarations of Interest

1.2 There were none.

1C. Exclusion of Press and Public

1.3 The Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A, Part 5A, Section 100A(4) or 100 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

1.4 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2008 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 3.1 The Chairman welcomed Councillors Fallon- Khan and Steedman to their first meeting of the new municipal year.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 4.1 There were none.

5. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 5.1 There were none.

6. FUTURE CHAIRING ARRANGEMENTS

- 6.1 The Principal Solicitor advised the Committee that the effect of the Local Government & Improvement in Health Act 2007 and the standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 was that the Committee and its Sub Committees should always be chaired by one of the independent persons. Consequently it no longer would be appropriate to appoint a member of the council as Deputy Chairman.

- 6.2 The Chairman explained that notwithstanding that the new legislation effectively required that if appointed a Deputy Chairman should be an independent Member he was of the view that it would not be appropriate to appoint one formally at the present time. In the event that he was unable to attend arrangements could be put into place for one of the Independent Members to Chair the meeting in his stead. He welcomed the additional and different dimension and perspective that elected Council Members were able to give and considered that it was vital to work proactively with the Council. This had worked well in the past and it was his intention to continue in that manner.

- 6.3 The Chairman stated that it was his intention to continue to invite Councillor Drake, representing the majority Group on the Council and Councillor Lepper (OS) to Chairman's meetings. Both were past Deputy Chairmen and as such were able to give a valuable insight into the workings of the Council

- 6.4 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the position of Deputy Chairman remain vacant for the present, with one of the independent Members deputising in the event of the Chairman being unavailable.

(2)Councillors Drake and Lepper as a majority group member and (OS) respectively continue to be invited to attend Chairman's pre - meetings .

7. THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE WITHIN THE NEW CONSTITUTION

- 7.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Strategy and Governance setting out for the information ,particularly of those who were not Members of the Council details of the new constitution and the provisions in it relating to the standards Committee. The new constitution had taken effect at the Council's

Annual General Meeting (AGM) of 15 May 2008 (for copy see minute book).

7.2 **RESOLVED** - That the contents of the report be noted.

8. CONFIRMATION OF ADOPTION OF NEW CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

8.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Strategy and Governance advising relative to actions taken to revise the Local Code of Conduct for Members which had been introduced in September 2007, in order to meet the requirements for executive arrangements (for copy see minute book).

8.2 **RESOLVED**- That the contents of the report be noted.

9. TRAINING EVENTS

9.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Strategy and Governance updating Members on training proposals for the forthcoming municipal year and seeking their approval of them (for copy see minute book).

9.2 Councillor Watkins sought confirmation regarding whether the proposed training would be made available to co-optees and others besides elected Members. The Standards and Complaints Manager explained that training would be available to all co-opted Members and Members of Rottingdean Parish Council in appropriate cases.

9.3 **RESOLVED** – (1) That the training initiatives proposed for 2008 /09 be agreed and noted ;

(2) That the Committee engage with the Member Development Working Group to provide seminars to be made available to all elected members and co-opted members with voting rights, these to focus on developing their awareness of current equalities legislation and good practice ;

(3) That further training be offered to all Members of Standards Committee on the process of Local Assessment of Complaints. (An event to be organised along similar lines to that held in March 2008) ;

(4) That officers and Members who had expressed an interest in training aimed at developing awareness of Mediation be invited to attend seminars being organised for ACeS South East Members ;

(5) That the Chairman, Dr M B M Wilkinson, Councillor Steedman and the Standards and Complaints Manager would be attending the Seventh Annual Assembly of standards Committee on 13 - 14 October 2008 .

10. COMPLAINTS UPDATE

10.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Strategy and Governance summarising information on complaints about Member conduct administered under (a) the new arrangements as defined by the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 which had come into effect with effect from 8 May

2008 and (b) the previous arrangements which had existed prior to that date .

10.2 Members referred to the inordinate amount of time taken by the Standards Board in determining Case SBE 15053.06. The Principal Solicitor explained that in that case he believed delays had arisen as a result of the Standards Board awaiting the outcome of due legal process and the subsequent appeal . The Chairman stated that issues relative to unacceptable delays had been raised with the Board in the past and with the imposition of the local arrangements the emphasis would be on a measured approach, but one which facilitated a decision being made and did not give rise to undue delays .

10.3 **RESOLVED** - That the content of the report be noted

The meeting concluded at 5.35pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of