



Standards Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Standards Committee** held in **Warren Room, Lewes House, 32 High Street, Lewes** on **29 April 2008** at **14:00** .

Present:

Mrs J M Redman (Independent Member – Chair on election)

Mr G R Eysenck (Independent Member)

Councillor B Clutterbuck (Ditchling Parish Council)

Councillor C Terry (Peacehaven Town Council)

Councillors I Eiloart, A T Jones, D H Mitchell, E E J Russell and R Sinclair

Officers Present:

C Knight, District Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

A J Batty, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer

D Feintuck, Committee Officer

Apologies Received:

Mr E P O Mercer (Independent Member)

Also Attending:

Councillor C Sugarman

	Minutes	Action
1	Election of Chair <u>Resolved</u> 1.1 That Mrs Redman be elected Chair for the meeting.	
2	Minutes The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	
3	Local Government And Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 -Changes to the Work of the Standards Committee The Committee considered Report No 85/08 which informed the Standards Committee of changes in the Standards Committee's work in accordance with provisions introduced by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The Monitoring Officer stated that the Committee would now be taking decisions on complaints against town, parish and district councillors which had previously been handled by the Standards Board for England. Work of Standards Sub-Committees would comprise three levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none">· To sift complaints against councillors and decide which merited further investigation and which did not;· To review cases with which complainants were unhappy re the Sub-Committee's initial decision; and· To consider an investigating officer's report should a hearing be considered necessary. The Monitoring Officer stated that in the previous four years	

the Committee had had to consider only two cases passed to it from the Standards Board although statistically this represented only 14% of the initial complaints received. In response to Committee members' questions, the Monitoring Officer considered that once the system was underway, a protocol could possibly be developed for reciprocal work with neighbouring councils, in particular for the initial sifts and reviews of complaints. The Monitoring Officer pointed out that, in pilot studies, Standards Committees had recommended more cases for investigation than had the Standards Board in the past. The Monitoring Officer recommended the Standards Board bulletin and other information available electronically at www.standardsboard.gov.uk

Resolved

3.1 That the Report be noted.

4

Composition of Standards Committees

The Committee considered Report No 86/08 which reviewed the composition of the Standards Committee to comply with the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 and Best Practice as advised by the Standards Board.

The Monitoring Officer pointed out that taking into account the Regulations and Best Practice, it was recommended that there be three permanent town and parish members of the Committee as opposed to the pool which was previously established. It might be necessary in the future to increase the Committee to include an additional independent member should the Committee's workload so demand.

Recommended:

4.1 That the composition of the Standards Committee be as follows:

- Five district councillors (one of whom is a member of the Cabinet)

- Three Independent members
 - Three town/parish members
- and that the terms served by the Independent and town/parish members run concurrently with the term of office of the district councillors; and
- 4.2** That appropriate changes be made to the Constitution.

5 Standards Committee – Procedure for Standards Hearings

The Committee considered Report No 87/08 which recommended a procedure to detail the way in which Standards Committee hearings were to be conducted and which complied with the guidance issued by the Standards Board for England. The Monitoring Officer stated that major training would be provided in the new municipal year, to include the new Standards Board guidance which was expected imminently. Dates would be fixed for prospective sifting and review meetings.

Resolved

- 5.1** That six-weekly meetings be scheduled on various week days to accommodate the Committee's workload of sifting complaints and reviewing complaints;
- 5.2** That the relevant information contained within the Report be advertised on the Council's website and publicised to town and parish councils together with the link to the Standards Board website; and
- 5.3** That the procedure for Standards Committee hearings set out at Appendix 1 to the Report be approved and adopted.

6 Training Exercise

The Monitoring Officer led the Committee through two examples from those provided by the Standards Board.

The meeting ended at **15:45** .

J M Redman Chair