

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 7 June 2005

PRESENT: Mrs. Roberts (Chair); Councillor Flavell (Deputy Chair); Councillors Allen, Hoare and Pritchard and Messrs Hughes and Romose

1. APOLOGIES

None.

2. MINUTES

Subject to minute 4 "Setting High Ethical Standards – Inspection By The Audit Commission" being amended by the addition of the following resolution; "That the Borough Solicitor investigate how an audit of the Committee's work could be carried out", the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2004 were signed by the Chair.

3. DEPUTATIONS / PUBLIC ADDRESSES

None.

4. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

None.

5. CODE OF CONDUCT REVIEW

The Chief Solicitor submitted a report that set out the Standards Board for England's Review of the Code of Conduct. Appended to the report was the Standards Board for England Consultation Document and a response prepared by the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors. The Chief Solicitor elaborated upon the main proposed changes and invited the Committee to comment on any part of the Consultation Document. A discussion then ensued.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agreed the broad thrust of the Standards Boards approach in the consultation paper but make the following specific points:

- (a) That in respect of question 18- the proposed creation of a new category of public service interest, the Committee indicate that it does not support the creation of such a category of interest.
- (b) That in respect of question 26- that the register of gifts and hospitality being publicly available, that the Committee indicate its support.
- (c) That in respect of question 27-that members should declare offers of gifts and hospitality that have been declined, the Committee indicate that it does not support this proposal.
- (d) That in respect of question 28- that members should declare a series of gifts from the same source even if the gifts do not individually meet the threshold for declaration, the Committee indicate its support.

- (e) That in respect of question 29- an appropriate threshold for the declaration of gifts and hospitality, the Committee indicated that this should be set at £50 and periodically reviewed.
- (f) That the Chief Solicitor responds to the consultation accordingly.

6. STANDARDS BOARD CONFERENCE 2005

The Chief Solicitor reported that this year's Standards Board Conference would take place on 5 and 6 September 2005 at Birmingham. In previous years the Chair had attended on behalf of the Committee.

RESOLVED That Mrs Roberts attend the Annual Standards Board Conference in September.

7. STANDARDS BOARD UPDATE

The Chief Solicitor submitted a report that enclosed the latest three Bulletins from the Standards Board for England for information.

Attention was drawn to Bulletin 23 and the Toolkit for Ethical Governance which was felt could be a useful tool in identifying the maintenance of high standards and identifying ways to improve performance. It was also noted that the proposals in Bulletin 24 in respect of Training in DVD Format should be supported.

- RESOLVED
1. That the report be received and that future Bulletins be circulated to Committee members as they are received.
 2. That the Chief Solicitor seek further information about the toolkit and DVD.

8. GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS ON LICENSING COMMITTEES

The Meeting Services Manager submitted copies of LACORS Guidance to Licensing Committee members in respect of Declarations of Interest and related matters and the Conduct of Hearings under the Licensing Act 2003. The former document followed a similar format to that advice given to Councillors serving on Planning Committees and the latter document fleshed out the regulations which provided the framework for hearings. Both sets of guidance had been circulated to members of the Licensing Committee.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

9. THE RICHARDSON CASE

The Chief Solicitor submitted a report that set out a Court of Appeal Judgement in 2003 that members attending a meeting as part of the public attendance (as opposed to being present as a member of a Committee) was still required to declare an interest on any issue being discussed by that meeting in which that member would ordinarily have an interest if they were a member of that committee.

RESOLVED That the advice contained in the report be circulated to all Councillors and Parish Councils.

10. PLANNING PROTOCOL

The Chief Solicitor commented that in view of the recent creation of the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation that there was a need for the Council to update its existing planning protocol which the Development Corporation would use in considering their own protocol. The Planning Committee would be involved in this process.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

11. STANDARDS BOARD INVESTIGATION

Report withdrawn.

The meeting concluded at 18.40 hours

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