

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Standards Committee held at Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 26 April, 2006.

PRESENT: Mr J A Ogden DL (Chairman), Mr L Christie, Mr D S Daley, Mrs F Leathers, Mr J F London and Miss R MacCrone.

IN ATTENDANCE: The Director of Law and Governance, Mr G Wild; the Head of Democratic Services, Mr S C Ballard and the Member Services Manager, Mrs J A Corbyn.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Minutes (Item 1)

(1) On Minute 5, the Committee noted that, as a result of the action agreed at the last meeting, Annual Reports had been received from the four remaining Members (Mr Hansell having been exempted by the Committee because of his ill-health).

(2) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) subject to the addition of the sentence: "The possibility of imposing sanctions on Members who fail to comply with the requirement to submit Annual Reports was discussed, being added after the fifth sentence of Minute 5, the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2005 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman; and
- (b) the Committee place on record its grave concern about the apparent interference in the implementation of the Member Remuneration Panel's modification to the wording of the Annual Report form, without any reference back to the Panel, and this matter be pursued by the Chairman with the Leader of the Council.

2. ODPM Document: "Standards of Conduct in English Local Government: The Future"

(Item 2 - Report by Head of Democratic Services)

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the Government's vision for the future of the Member conduct regime as set out in the document: "Standards of Conduct in English Local Government: The Future", be welcomed;
- (b) the Government's intention to amend the Model Code of Conduct for Members along the lines suggested by the Standards Board for England, be welcomed;

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- (c) it be suggested to the ODPM that the Model Code of Conduct should be further amended to include reference to all those rules relating to Member conduct included in other legislation, eg the provision in s106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 which prevents Councillors who are in arrears with their Council Tax payments by two months or more from voting on their Council's budget and Council Tax. The purpose of this suggestion is that it would assist Members to observe the various rules relating to their conduct if all those rules were consolidated within the Model Code of Conduct;
- (d) the Government be requested to bring into effect its proposals relating to standards of conduct in English local government as speedily as possible.

3. Register of Interests

(Item 3 - Report by Head of Democratic Services)

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the report on public enquiries about the Register of Interests be noted; and
- (b) the Council be recommended to issue a reminder to Members of the need not only to keep their Register of Interests up to date, but also to declare at meetings any interest they may have in any of the items under discussion.

4. Date of Next Meeting

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the next meeting of the Committee be held on Wednesday, 14 June 2006 at 2.30 pm for the purpose of considering Members' Annual Reports and the Committee's draft Annual Report to the Council.