

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Standards Committee held in the Swale 2 Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 28 May 2009.

PRESENT: Mr L Christie, Mr D S Daley, Mr J F London, Mrs N Ahmed and Mr P Gammon, MBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr G Wild (Director of Law and Governance) and Mr P Sass (Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies

(Item 1)

An apology for absence was received from Ms MacCrone.

2. Election of Chairman

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr Sass invited the Committee to make nominations for one of the independent Members to take the chair for this meeting only.

RESOLVED that Mr Gammon be elected as the Chairman for this meeting only.

3. Declarations of Interest

(Item 2)

No Declarations of Interest were made by Members of the Committee.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 April 2009

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 April be approved, subject to the correction of a small typographical error in the first paragraph of the Minute at item number 7 (monitoring of complaints); in the second line the word "Member" should read "Members".

5. Members' Annual Reports

(Item 4)

(Mrs Fiona Leathers, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel was in attendance for this item)

(1) The Chairman welcomed Mrs Fiona Leathers to the meeting for this item.

(2) Mrs Leathers stated that the Remuneration Panel had been very pleased with the overall response to the submission of annual reports by Members this year, with some 82 out of 84 reports being submitted to the Panel before its meeting on 8 May.

The remaining two Members had not submitted their reports on time due to sickness. She added that the quality of the annual reports had improved each year and the Group Leaders had expressed their support and enthusiasm for the continuation of the process. Mrs Leathers also stated that the Panel would be carrying out further work later in the year to make further improvements to the format of the annual report and the written guidance on the completion of annual reports. She also added that the Panel had approved the principle of a role description for all Members, which would feature as part of the revised Members Allowances Scheme. The role description sought to describe in simple and brief terms the key activities and roles of elected Members.

(3) During discussion, Mr Sass undertook to investigate what further assistance could be offered to Members in the completion of their annual reports, including meeting attendance statistics and details of the spending of their Member grants. Mr Sass was also asked to ensure that the Members' Annual reports featured prominently on the website.

(4) Mrs Ahmed suggested that the Remuneration Panel's report to the Standards Committee, which in turn featured in the Committee's Annual Report to the County Council, should include a synopsis of where the Members' grant money has been spent.

(5) RESOLVED that the report of the Remuneration Panel be noted.

6. Standards Committee Annual Report 2009

(Item 5)

The Committee considered its draft annual report and made the following comments:

- The names of the Members of the Committee beneath the Chairman should be in alphabetical order; and
- If not possible for this report, future reports should include a synopsis of where Members' individual Member grants have been spent.

RESOLVED that the draft report be approved, subject to the above comments.

7. Member Induction: The Role of Members and the Ethical Framework

(Item 6)

(1) Mr Sass gave an overview of the format of the training sessions for both new and returning Members to KCC following the elections on 4 June, in terms of the responsibilities of Members under the Code of Conduct and the role of the Standards Committee.

(2) RESOLVED that the outline and format of the training sessions for Members be approved.

8. Annual Return to the Standards Board for England

(Item 7)

(1) The Committee considered its annual return to the Standards Board for England and made the following comments:

- On page 22 under “Promoting Standards”, amend the second paragraph to ensure that it refers to the attendance of independent Members at Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings.
- On page 22 under “Training”, the answer to the first question should be “yes”, with the relevant details being the Member Development IMG and this Committee’s consideration of Member training on ethical standards being discussed at the Committee’s meeting on 28 November 2008.
- On page 24 under “Leadership”, the answer to the final question on executive Member responsibility for standards should be “no”, as the Committee operates independently of the executive, even though the Deputy Leader of the Council has portfolio responsibility for Legal and Democratic Services.
- On page 26 under “Officer Conduct”, the answer to the question on the publication of the register of senior officers’ interests on the Council’s website should say “no” rather than “not currently”

(2) RESOLVED that the annual return be approved, subject to the above amendments and Mr Sass be requested to supply all Members of the Committee with a copy of the final version.

9. Standards Committee Work Programme and Future Meeting Dates

(Item 8)

RESOLVED that the work programme and future meeting dates be noted.