

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Standards Committee held in the Stour Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 18 March 2010.

PRESENT: Miss R MacCrone (Chairman), Mr L Christie, Mr D S Daley, 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

14. Substitutes/apologies

(Item 1)

An apology for absence was received from Mr London.

15. Declarations of Interest

(Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest by Members in any item on the agenda.

16. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2009

(Item 3)

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17. The role and remit of the Standards Committee

(Item 4)

The Committee considered a discussion paper from the Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership, which examined notable practice in other Councils in relation to a possible wider remit and role for the Standards Committee.

During the debate, the following comments were made:

- In response to a question from Mr Gammon, Mr Sass confirmed that the operating costs for the Standards Committee, including training, conference attendance etc. was contained within the budget for the Democratic Services and Local Leadership Unit
- Mr Gammon suggested that there should be a rota amongst the independent members for attendance at main KCC meetings
- There was general acceptance that the focus of the Committee was appropriate and proportionate, given the overall high standard of ethical conduct in the

Authority. It was agreed that the leadership of the Committee was key and that this was a notable aspect of the Committee's work.

- Mr Wild stated that the role of the Committee was well respected in the Authority, but that it was important the Committee was not overworked by involving itself in wider aspects that were being managed effectively in other ways.
- There was agreement that a shadowing programme should be developed for independent Members of the Committee to spend time with elected Members in their various roles.

Resolved that:

- (1) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (2) the existing role and remit of the Committee was proportionate and that no changes needed to be made to the formal activities or Terms of Reference of the Committee at this stage;
- (3) the Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership be requested to arrange a Member Shadowing programme for the independent Members of the Committee.

18. Members' Register of Interests, Gifts and Hospitality

(Item 5)

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership.

Members of the Committee were concerned about the completeness of the declarations on gifts and hospitality and suggested that the Independent Remuneration Panel should give consideration to an amendment to the format for Members' Annual Reports, which specifically asks for either a full declaration or a nil return from each Member. It was also suggested that Members should be reminded of the need to declare any gifts and hospitality on a quarterly basis.

Resolved:

- (1) that the contents of the report be noted and that a review of Members' Declarations of Interest by the independent Members of the Committee was deemed to be not necessary;
- (2) the Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership be requested to invite the Independent Remuneration Panel to consider an amendment to the Members' Annual Reports for 2010/11, which specifically asked for either a full declaration of gifts and hospitality or a nil return from each Member; and
- (3) the Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership be requested to remind all Members on a quarterly basis to declare any gifts and hospitality.

19. Complaints Monitoring

(Item 6)

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership on complaints monitoring.

The Committee considered that the wording on the third column in the schedule of complaints should be amended by the addition of the words: following consideration by (either) the Assessment, Review or Consideration Sub Committee, to reflect the work involved in determining complaints about the conduct of Members. It was also suggested that the final column in the schedule should be clearer about whether any further action was necessary in each case.

Resolved that:

- (1) the current position with regard to the receipt and consideration of complaints be noted;
- (2) the wording contained within the schedule of complaints received be amended as indicated above; and
- (3) the Committee agrees that there are no changes required to its Assessment Criteria at the present time.

20. Standards Committee Work Programme and future meeting dates

(Item 7)

The Committee considered its future work programme.

Members noted that the Committee's Annual Report would need to be prepared and consulted upon well in advance of the next meeting on 12 May, as it would have already been circulated to the County Council, prior to its annual meeting on 13 May. Mr Sass undertook to ensure this happened.

Resolved: that the Committee's future work programme be noted.