

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Standards Committee held in the Wantsum Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 12 May 2010.

PRESENT: Miss R MacCrone (Chairman), Mr L Christie, Mr D S Daley 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. Substitutes/apologies

(Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Ahmed and Mr London.

2. Declarations of Interest

(Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest made by Members in respect of any items contained in the agenda.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2010

(Item 3)

In relation to the attendance of independent Members at formal KCC meetings as observers, it was agreed that this is good practice but that such attendances should be kept to a reasonable level.

Mr Sass undertook to circulate details of the Annual Conference of Standards for England to Members. The Chairman stated that she would be happy to give up her place if Mr London wished to attend.

Members agreed to ask the Group Leaders for their views on the possibility of the independent Members shadowing elected Members in their various roles.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2010 be approved and signed as a correct record.

4. Members' Annual Reports

(Item 4)

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Fiona Leathers, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel, to the meeting.

Mrs Leathers stated that the key conclusions of her Panel on this year's Annual Reports were as follows:

- The level of detail supplied about the utilisation of Members' individual grants was much improved this year.
- The review of the template and guidance notes was worthwhile as the overall quality had also improved.
- Most Members had indicated details of their training (an improvement on last year), but the section on the benefits of training had been left blank by most Members
- Letters had been sent to Group Leaders, highlighting both good and poor reports.
- Disappointingly, approximately one third of Members did not provide full details of their SRA's, particularly from other local and public authorities. In particular, Mrs Leathers stated that she found it difficult to accept that only one Member was a Member of a Primary Care Trust Board. The Panel had agreed that the template would be further amended next year to include a table for SRA positions.
- An increasing number of Members were using social networking sites to contact constituents.

Committee Members thanked Mrs Leathers for the Panel's hard work on the Annual Reports and made the following comments:

- The guidance notes should be further amended to make reference to the availability of Members' attendance information via the modern.gov system
- The Panel should re-examine their stance on SRAs for minority groups, which was a very busy role, especially at budget time.

RESOLVED: that the contents of the report be noted and the Independent Remuneration Panel be thanked for their hard work on the Members' Annual Reports.

5. The Standards Committee's Annual Report to the County Council (Item 5)

The Committee made the following comments on the draft Annual Report:

- Reference be made to the proposed shadowing arrangements between independent Members of the Standards Committee and elected Members
- The comments relating to the function and purpose of Members' Annual Reports (page 10) be moved to the section on Members' Annual Reports on page 13

- Reference be made to the statutory timescales for dealing with complaints in the Monitoring Officer Protocol (page 16)
- That the key to the graph on page 21 either be altered or produced in colour for the County Council meeting, so that the pie chart is clear

RESOLVED: that the draft Annual Report be approved, subject to the amendments shown above.

6. The Annual Return to Standards for England (Item 6)

The Committee agreed the following amendments to the draft return to Standards for England:

- Reference be made to the anonymised synopsis of complaints, which form part of regular monitoring reports to the Standards Committee (page 30 – publicising complaints).
- The typographical errors on page 35 should be corrected before the final submission is made

RESOLVED: that the draft Annual Return for Standards for England be approved, subject to the amendments shown above.

7. Standards Committee Work Programme and future meeting dates (Item 7)

The Committee agreed to invite Mrs Leathers to attend the July meeting when the three Group Leaders would also be present.

Mr Daley offered his apologies for the July meeting, as he would be attending a hospital appointment.

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