

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, 5 October 2011.

PRESENT: Miss R MacCrone (Chairman), Mr L Christie, Mr D S Daley, Mr J F London (Substitute for Mr K A Ferrin, MBE) and Mr P Gammon, MBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Sass (Head of Democratic Services)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

23. Substitutes/apologies

(Item 1)

Mr Sass reported that an apology had been received from Mr Ferrin, who was substituted by Mr London. In addition, Mrs Ahmed had also submitted her apologies for the meeting.

24. Declarations of Interest

(Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest made by members of the Committee.

25. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2011

(Item 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2011, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26. The Localism Bill - proposed changes to the Standards regime

(Item 4)

The Committee gave further consideration to the proposals contained in the Localism Bill for the future of the standards regime.

Following a detailed discussion, the Committee agreed that the next step would be to have a discussion with the Group Leaders about the future shape of the ethical standards regime on the assumption that the proposals contained in the Localism Bill would be enacted as currently drafted. The opinions of the Group Leaders on the following matters were considered key in establishing a way forward:

- Whether KCC intended to retain a Code of Conduct for Members once the statutory requirement to have one disappears
- If a code is retained, what mechanism should there be for dealing with complaints that a Member is alleged to have breached the code?

- If a code is retained, what role does KCC envisage independent members having, if any, in relation to the new arrangements?
- The extent to which elected Members and others are consulted about the proposed new arrangements, prior to the County Council being asked to determine the future shape of the ethical standards regime once the Localism Bill is enacted.
- The public perception of there being, or appearing to be, any diminution of the stature of the existing ethical standards procedures
- The possibility of an enhanced role for the Monitoring Officer to investigate and take action in relation to certain types of complaints about the conduct of elected Members
- The role that the Members' Annual reports have in the overall assessment of the effectiveness of elected Members

Mr Sass was asked to prepare a short paper to assist with the discussion with Group Leaders, based on a wide range of options for the future of the ethical standards regime.

Resolved: that the report be noted and the Head of Democratic Services be asked to invite the three Group Leaders to the next meeting of the Committee on 17 November 2011 to enable a discussion to take place on a wide range of options for the future of the ethical standards regime at Kent County Council.

27. Standards Committee Work Programme and future meeting dates

(Item 5)

The Committee noted its current draft work programme, which had been circulated as part of the agenda papers, and future meeting dates, as follows:

17 November 2011
 7 March 2012
 22 May 2012
 10 July 2012
 13 November 2012

28. Any other urgent business

(Item 6)

There were no items of urgent business.

29. Date of Next Meeting: 17 November 2011

(Item 7)

The Committee noted that its next meeting was on 17 November 2011.