

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

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Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held on Thursday 23 December 2010 at City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 1400
Concluded 1430

PRESENT –

Independent Persons

The Very Revd Dr D J Ison, Mr G Dobson and Mrs A Mullen

Parish and Town Council Members

Parish Councillors Bowen, Mitchell and Thompson

Councillors

| CONSERVATIVE | LABOUR | LIBERAL DEMOCRAT |
|--------------|---------|------------------|
| D Smith | Ferriby | G Reid |

Apologies: Councillors Owens and Lee

The Very Revd Dr Ison in the Chair

33. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

34. MINUTES

Resolved -

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2010 be signed as a correct record.



Suzan Hemingway, City Solicitor

35. **INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

36. **MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT ON COMPLAINTS**

The Monitoring Officer reported to the meeting the receipt of complaints notified to her, the stage that notified complaints had reached and the final outcome on the consideration of a complaint, where appropriate.

She noted that, in the first reported case, which had been outstanding for some time, she had contacted the complainant but had received no response. She suggested that the Chief Whip of the political group concerned be contacted to try to expedite the matter.

Resolved –

That, in case 2009/08, the Monitoring Officer be requested to contact the complainant member's group whip to draw attention to the fact that no response has been received to her previous correspondence.

ACTION: City Solicitor

37. **ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR ENGLAND DECISIONS**

Members considered summaries of recent decisions made by the Adjudication Panel for England regarding allegations of misconduct against members which were set out in **Document "G"**.

The City Solicitor advised that the first case set out in Document "G" had been selected for Members to consider because it raised interesting points in respect of:-

- the importance of robust procedure at hearings
- the importance of the rules of natural justice
- the fact that campaigning for re-election does not constitute a Member acting in their official capacity

In response to questions from Members she confirmed that potential conflicts of interest were checked when panels were arranged to avoid problems of bias. The Chair considered that it would also be appropriate to add a formal stage into the proceedings to ask Members at the commencement of each meeting to confirm that they had no interest which would cause or give an impression of bias or conflict.

The City Solicitor also confirmed that, during meetings of the Hearings Sub-Committee and Determination Sub-Committee, the investigating officer would always be present so that their report could be questioned and challenged by Members.

She then referred to the second case set out in Document "G", which raised interesting points in respect of bullying and harassment, which did not have to be a continued process or ongoing problem to be viewed very seriously.

It also showed that, in cases where there were two versions of events, a panel may have to make a finding of fact about which version it believed.

No Action

38. STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

An updated copy of the Committee's work programme was appended to the agenda for Members' information.

Members considered the outstanding / deferred items on the plan, with a view to deciding which should be given priority.

A Parish Council Representative considered the item on engaging with Parish Councils to be important as he reported that there was concern among some Parish Councils in respect of their relationship with the District Council, particularly in respect of awareness of the Parish Charter.

The City Solicitor advised that this Committee had no remit in respect of the Parish Charter but undertook to report the Members' concerns to the Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services, within whose remit it fell.

She also advised that the item in respect of the use of council resources including email and the internet should be expedited as the current policy had been developed before the advent of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

Resolved –

That, of the items marked deferred on the work programme, the items in respect of Conduct and Representation on Partner Organisations and Review of the Protocol on the Use of Council Resources including Use of Email and the Internet be given priority for inclusion on future agenda.

Action: City Solicitor

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.