

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

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Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held on Tuesday 17 May 2011 at City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 1400
Concluded 1435

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
Binney	Ferriby	G Reid
D Smith		

Apologies: Councillors Lee and A Thornton and Mr M Shakeel

The Very Revd Dr Ison in the Chair

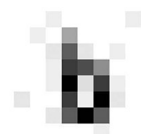
46. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

47. MINUTES

Resolved -

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2011 be signed as a correct record.



Suzan Hemingway, City Solicitor

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

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

49. **STANDARDS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The City Solicitor presented a report (**Document “I”**) which invited the Standards Committee to review recommendations that it had made during the Municipal Year 2010/11 to monitor progress in implementation.

The appendix to the report set out all the recommendations that had required some actions to implement and the progress in achieving implementation. It was revealed that the majority of actions had been completed.

Outstanding actions included a request to publish electronically the Members' Register of Interest. The City Solicitor explained that discussions with the political groups had been held up during the election period but would recommence following the Council Annual General Meeting on 24 May 2011. Standards Board advice was that details of a public register should contain only those Members who agreed to their inclusion. It was felt, however, that this would draw attention to Members who had not wished to publish that information electronically and it would be confusing to the public if that version was incomplete.

The City Solicitor reported that she was discussing the implications of the Localism Bill and the consideration of adopting a local code of conduct for the authority with the political group leaders. It was hoped that a report could be provided to full Council containing the views of the political groups.

A Member questioned whether the questions contained in the Register of Interest had been considered for amendment as he felt that they were obscure. The method for ensuring they were presented in plain English was also questioned. In response the City Solicitor agreed to redraft the registration form and also to provide examples used in other West Yorkshire authorities for discussion at the next meeting. She also agreed to check other proposals contained in the bill such as the implications of 'failure to declare'. It was agreed that the form should be considered before it was presented to the political groups.

The City Solicitor advised that there was, to date, no date for the implementation of the Localism Bill. She also agreed to make the political groups aware of the Standards Committee's view that it could be useful for them to be involved in discussions about the Bill's implications with the groups.

Resolved –

- (1) That the progress made towards the implementation of Standards Committee recommendations be noted.**
- (2) That the City Solicitor be requested to provide a future report on outstanding recommendations, including the implications of the Localism Bill on the Standards regime in Bradford, within the next six months and that the issue of the Members' Register of Interests be the subject of discussion at the meeting scheduled for 2 June 2011.**

ACTION: City Solicitor

50. STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

The City Solicitor presented a report (**Document “J”**) in which the Committee was asked to consider and comment on the draft Annual Report 2010/11.

The draft Annual Report was attached at appendix 1 to Document “J”.

It was explained that the report contained details of the local assessment of complaints and the complaints received and dealt with under that procedure. Members were reminded that the complaint form had been amended to enable complainants to indicate, by the ticking of a box, the nature of the breach of the code being alleged. This had resulted in a demonstration of the complaint not being articulated elsewhere on the form.

It was acknowledged by the Committee that members of the Assessment Sub Committee had found it difficult to recognise the breach being claimed and, therefore, to accurately determine the complaint. It was believed that the opportunity should be made available for complainants to provide more information to articulate the nature of the breach and to also allow Members to understand the nature of the complaint. The City Solicitor explained that the adoption of a local code would provide the opportunity to redraft the form to be less complex, repetitive and easier to understand. It was suggested that if the implementation of the Localism Bill was some time away a paragraph could be inserted into the existing form to ask complainants to identify actions which led them to believe there had been a breach of the code.

Members questioned whether there was any particular pattern to the complaints received and asked if any particular recurring issues had been identified. In response it was explained that in this year no pattern had emerged. In previous years when recurring issues were revealed action had been taken, through training and support, to address those matters. Members requested the City Solicitor include a paragraph within the report to explain that no patterns had emerged during the year.

It was requested that any outstanding complaints from the 2008/9 municipal year be also included in the Annual Report 2010/11.

No resolution was passed in respect of this item.

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee. minutes\sta17May

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER