

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

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Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held on Wednesday 3 August 2011 at City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 1400
Concluded 1515

PRESENT –

Independent Persons

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

Parish and Town Council Members

Parish Councillor Mitchell

Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Binney	Ferriby	G Reid
Kelly	Lee	
D Smith		

Apologies: Mr Shakeel, Parish Councillors Bowen and Thompson and Councillor A Thornton

The Very Revd Dr Ison in the Chair

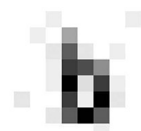
6. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

7. MINUTES

Resolved -

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2011 be signed as a correct record.



Suzan Hemingway, City Solicitor

8. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

9. 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 complaints, where appropriate.

She advised that, in cases no. 2010/13 and 2010/14, the subject Members concerned had not demonstrated a willingness to participate in the investigation.

Members of the Committee indicated that this was not appropriate and instructed that the Members concerned be contacted to require their participation.

The Monitoring Officer also noted that, in case 2011/01, a Review Sub-Committee had met to consider the complaint and had come to a different view than the original Assessment Sub-Committee, which it was quite entitled to do.

Resolved –

That, in respect of complaints 2010/13 and 2010/14, the Monitoring Officer be instructed to contact the Members concerned to expedite their participation in the ongoing investigations.

ACTION: City Solicitor

10. MEMBERS' REGISTER OF INTERESTS

Previous Reference: Minute 4 (2011/12)

Members were invited to consider proposed amendments to the Register of Members' Financial and Other Interests set out in the appendix to **Document "A"** and asked to agree the subsequent circulation of the amended document to all Members of Council.

A Member had a number of suggested amendments, including:-

- that the issue of employment/Directorship be clarified
- that the issue of 'management or control' be clarified
- that the words 'other than the Council' in question 5 were unnecessary

Members discussed the points made and agreed that further clarity was needed in order to assist Members as much as possible when they were completing the form.

It was also considered that a 'don't know' option should be added to the form wherever appropriate to assist Members to make as full a disclosure as possible about organisations with which they were involved.

Further suggestions for clarification were also made in respect of the payment of expenses and membership of a public authority or body exercising functions of a public nature in a capacity other than having been appointed by the Council.

Resolved –

- (1) That the following further amendments be made to the draft Register of Members' Financial and Other Interests Document:**
 - (i) A “don't know” tick box be provided for all appropriate questions**
 - (ii) The words “other than the Council” be deleted from question 5**
 - (iii) That in all questions where the phrase “general control or management” is used, the word “general” be removed and a link be provided to the advice that Members consult the Monitoring Officer if they are unsure.**
 - (iv) That, in question 1, the phrase “this does not include remunerated directors who are dealt with at question 4” be included.**
 - (v) That the guidance note on remuneration be amended to explain that it does not include the payment of expenses.**
 - (vi) That, at question 10, the phrase “in your own right” be underlined.**
- (2) That, having amended the draft form, the Monitoring officer email it to Members of the Committee for final comment before circulation to all Members for completion.**

ACTION: City Solicitor

11. REVIEW OF PROTOCOL ON THE USE OF COUNCIL RESOURCES INCLUDING THE USE OF EMAIL AND THE INTERNET

The Monitoring Officer discussed with the Committee the Protocol on the Use of Council Resources including the use of Email and the Internet which was set out in the Council's Constitution.

A copy of the relevant section of the Constitution was circulated at the meeting and the Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that other local Councils that she had consulted did not have such a protocol. She considered that the protocol had been written at a time when the use of email and the internet was still very new and unfamiliar. However, this was not now the case and the general principles set out in the Code of Conduct in respect of proper conduct and the responsible use of resources should be sufficient to guide Members.

Members confirmed that they already received emails from the ICT Consultant responsible for Member support in respect of general good practice and efficient use of equipment..

The Committee discussed in some detail the arrangements made for the provision of ICT equipment for new Members, noting that such equipment was no longer likely to be unfamiliar to people and that, if a new Member preferred to use their existing PC or laptop, they could have access to the Council's system via that machine.

The City Solicitor noted that the increased use of ICT by Members represented a significant improvement in the speed and efficiency of communication and a considerable saving by reducing the circulation of paper.

The Chair noted that the current protocol included a list of legislation which Members could find themselves in breach of by misuse of any official communication, including electronic. He considered that any advice or protocol given to Members in future should include that list.

Members agreed that the Monitoring Officer should investigate the possibility of a brief protocol to be issued when ICT equipment was first provided and which could replace the protocol contained in the Constitution.

She was also asked to consult with the Member Development Manager in respect of ICT training for Members.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Monitoring Officer be requested to consult with the officers responsible for provision of IT equipment to Members to draw up a protocol advising on appropriate usage for issue when the equipment is first provided.**
- (2) That the Monitoring Officer be requested to draft a brief guidance note for Members in respect of the potential pitfalls of all forms of communication, including electronic, and that this be presented to a future meeting of the Committee for comment.**

ACTION: City Solicitor

**12. FEEDBACK FROM THE MEETING OF THE DETERMINATION
SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 JULY 2011**

The Monitoring Officer provided feedback for the Committee on the meeting of the Determination Sub-Committee which was scheduled for 28 July 2011.

She noted that the Sub-Committee had been adjourned to a future date and advised that practical issues arising from this case should be very helpful when the Committee discussed how it would proceed with Member complaints in the wake of the Localism Bill.

Members concurred with that view, considering the present procedures to be cumbersome and bureaucratic for all concerned as well as open to exploitation. They considered that they could be greatly streamlined and simplified.

The Chair required that the matter be examined again once the Sub-Committee had been reconvened and concluded.

No Action

13. **STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

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

No Action

Chair

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