

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Standards Committee **Date:** 13 April 2010

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 9.15 pm

Members Present: Ms M Marshall (Independent Member) (Chairman), Councillor B Surtees (Parish or Town Council Representative), Councillor Mrs D Borton (Parish or Town Council Representative), Councillor B Rolfe (EFDC Appointee), Councillor J Salter (Parish or Town Council Representative), Councillor Mrs P Smith (EFDC Appointee), G Weltch (Independent Member) and Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse (EFDC Appointee)

Other Councillors:

Apologies: M Wright (Independent Member)

Officers Present: C O'Boyle (Monitoring Officer), I Willett (Deputy Monitoring Officer) and G Lunnun (Allegations Determination Manager)

21. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2010 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made pursuant to the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.

23. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

(a) Predisposition, Predetermination or Bias, and the Code (Minute 15)

The Committee considered drawing the attention of councillors to the updated Standards for England guidance on Predisposition, Predetermination or Bias, and the Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED:

That the Standards for England revised guidance on Predisposition, Predetermination or Bias and the Code of Conduct be reported to councillors in the Council Bulletin.

(b) Planning Protocol – Review (Minute 18)

The Monitoring Officer reported that together with the Deputy Monitoring Officer she had attended a course on 10 February 2010 which had been due to consider the implementation of new Member and Officer Codes of Conduct. Unfortunately as the new codes had not been issued by the day of the event the course had taken a different approach and had concentrated on other issues. The Committee noted that it had been suggested at the course that in the event of a change of Government following the election on 6 May 2010 it was possible that the proposed changes to the Members' Code of Conduct would not survive in their drafted forms.

24. STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND - ANNUAL RETURN 2009/10

The Committee considered the questions which formed the return for 2010 together with some guidance notes issued by Standards for England and concentrated on the questions which related to aspects of work currently not undertaken by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the officers complete and submit the Standards for England Annual Return 2010 taking account of the views of the Committee;
- (2) That in future:
 - (a) a personal statement by the Chairman of the Committee be included in the Standards Committee Annual Report and in the "Forester" magazine with reference in the latter to the ability to view the full report on the Council's website;
 - (b) the dates when complaints are received/determined to be included in the statistical information in the Annual Report, subject to clarification from Standards for England about their term "the length of time taken dealing with complaints";
 - (c) a Forward Plan of the Committee be developed concentrating on planned training for members;
 - (d) Standards Committee Independent Members to contribute to other authority meetings, if invited to do so;
 - (e) following the appointment of a new Independent Member(s) of the Committee expected to take place in May 2010 publicity be issued regarding the work of the Committee as well as the new appointment(s);
 - (f) meetings be held between Committee Members and District Council Group Leaders and non-affiliated members if an issue suggests that such a meeting would be beneficial; and
 - (g) future training for members include advice about lobbying, electioneering, blogging and/or the use of social media.

25. ALLEGATIONS MADE ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF DISTRICT AND PARISH/TOWN COUNCILLORS

The Committee received a schedule regarding current allegations made about the conduct of District and Parish/Town Councillors.

RESOLVED:

That in future, in addition to a schedule being submitted to the Committee in public session, provision be made in private session to enable all members of the Committee to discuss issues arising from Hearings Sub-Committee meetings.

26. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that the District Council's calendar for 2010/11 provided for meetings of the Committee on 13 July 2010, 12 October 2010, 18 January 2011 and 19 April 2011.

27. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below as they would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act indicated and the exemption is considered to outweigh the potential public interest in disclosing the information:

<u>Agenda Item No.</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Exempt Information Paragraph Number</u>
8	Local Assessment Cases 1A and 5/2009	1
9	Standards for England Direction	1

28. LOCAL ASSESSMENT CASES 1A AND 5/2009

The Monitoring Officer summarised the issues which had arisen at a meeting of the Hearings Sub-Committee held on 1 March 2010.

29. STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND DIRECTION

The Monitoring Officer and the Deputy Monitoring Officer advised members of progress being made in relation to a Direction from Standards for England regarding a Parish Council.

30. CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE

Ms M Marshall advised that following her notice of resignation as an Independent Member of the Committee this would be her last meeting.

She thanked members and officers for the help and assistance which she had received during her time as a member of the Committee.

The Monitoring Officer thanked Ms M Marshall for the work she had undertaken as a member of the Committee since 2001 and as Chairman since 2007.

CHAIRMAN