

Town Hall
Worthing

When telephoning please contact Neil Terry ext. 1073
email: neil.terry@worthing.gov.uk

Dear Councillor

Standards Committee

A meeting of the Standards Committee will be held in the Committee Suite,
at 6 pm on Thursday 18 June 2009, to consider the business set out in the
following Agenda.

Yours sincerely



Chief Executive

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Independent Members – having full voting rights

Jane Stirzaker-Evans (Chairman), Vacancy, Cpt. Rodney Bilton and John Evans

Councillors

Paul High, Heather Mercer, Keith Sunderland, Hazel Thorpe, Steve Waight and Tom Wye

Substitute Members

Councillors Ann Barlow, James Doyle, Norah Fisher and Elizabeth Sparkes

A G E N D A

1. **Minutes**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 11 March 2009.

2. **Public Question Time**

To receive any questions from members of the public.

(Note: Public Question Time will operate for up to 15 minutes).

3. **Declarations of Interest**

Members and Officers are invited to make any declarations of personal and/or prejudicial interest they may have in relation to items on this agenda. The declaration should refer to the nature of the interest as well as its existence.

Members and officers may seek advice upon any relevant interest from a legal officer prior to the meeting.

4. **Review of Website**

To review the contents of the Worthing Borough Council website with regard to the conduct of Councillors.

5. **Equality and Diversity**

To update the Committee on the progress made with the Equality and Diversity Action Plan at Adur and Worthing Councils.

6. **Protocol for Members of Licensing and Control Committee and Development Control Committee**

Verbal Report from the Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services

7. **Recruitment of 4th Independent Member of the Standards Committee**

Verbal Report from the Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services

8. **Complaints – notification to Members**

To consider which members of the Council should be notified when a complaint is received about the conduct of a member.

9. **Understanding the Code of Conduct**

To agree a questionnaire designed to ascertain the level of understanding of the Code of Conduct within members and co-opted members of Worthing Borough Council.

10. **Action Plan**

To consider the Action Plan for 2009/10.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**18 June 2009
at 6.00 p.m.**

Present: Jane Stirzaker-Evans (Chairman);
and John Evans

Councillors: Paul High, Keith Sunderland and Hazel Thorpe

Apologies for Absence: Cpt. Rodney Bilton and Councillors Heather Mercer and Tom Wye

Substitutes: Councillor Ann Barlow for Councillor Steve Waight

Also present: Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Equalities and Diversity Officer and Democratic Services Officer

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 March 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

2. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

4. Review of Website

The Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer introduced a report providing a review of the contents of the Worthing Borough Council web-site with regard to the conduct of Councillors.

The Committee discussed the accessibility and usability of the web-site and reviewed the screen prints attached to the report as appendices. The following observations were noted:

- making complaints could be made easier
- who to contact could be added as an additional option on the tool bar
- a plain English definition of Prejudicial Interests could be added to the site
- translation facilities should be available on the site
- option to be added to increase font size
- minimise the use of local government jargon

RESOLVED, that the Committee request the Monitoring Officer amend the website to make it more accessible, more readable and to add clear information regarding who to contact when making a complaint.

5. Progress on Equalities and Diversity Issues

The Equalities and Diversity Officer introduced a report providing details of progress made on the Equality and Diversity Action Plan at Adur and Worthing Councils since the report to Committee on 12 January 2009.

The Committee noted that two Councillors still required the Equalities and Diversity training. Officers are liaising with these Members to arrange a suitable date. Over half of Worthing Borough Council's employees have received the training. It was noted that part time and casual workers were difficult to provide training to due to their availability.

Concerns were raised regarding the lack of performance measurement figures included within the report. Officers suggested that the Equality Framework document be circulated to the Committee.

Concerns were also raised at the 0% response rate from ethnic minority groups to Council consultations.

RESOLVED,

- that the Equalities and Diversity Officer notify the Leader and Deputy Leader of the group(s) of the names of those Members who have not attended Equalities and Diversity training;
- that the Independent Members are invited to the Equalities and Diversity Training for Members;
- that future Equalities and Diversity reports contain performance data;
- that copies of the Worthing Community Equalities Group minutes are circulated to the Standards Committee membership.

6. Protocol for Members of the Licensing and Control Committee and the Development Control Committee

The Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer presented an oral report to the Committee.

RESOLVED, that a report be brought to the Standards Committee in the Autumn.

7. Recruitment of 4th Independent Member of the Standards Committee

The Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer updated the Committee regarding the appointment of a 4th Independent Member to the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

8. Complaints – Notification to Members

The Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer introduced a report to consider which members of the Council should be notified when a complaint is received about the conduct of a Member and what information should be provided in light of the Local Standards Framework, Guide for Authorities provided by the Standards Board for England.

The Committee considered who should be notified and when and what additional information should be made available.

RESOLVED,

- that the Committee agree that the Chairman of the Standards Committee and the Leader of the group (or if the Leader is unavailable or is the subject Member, the Deputy Leader) of which the subject member is a member should be notified of the fact that a complaint has been received;
- that the Committee agree that the Chairman of the Standards Committee and the Leader of the relevant group should only be notified of the fact that a complaint has been received and the paragraph of the code which is alleged to have been breached;
- that the Committee agrees that where information is provided to the Chairman of the Standards Committee and the Leader of the relevant group, that information shall not be passed to any other person save with the agreement of the Monitoring Officer.

9. Understanding the Code of Conduct

The Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer introduced a report providing a questionnaire designed to ascertain the level of understanding of the Code of Conduct within Members and co-opted Members of Worthing Borough Council.

RESOLVED,

- that the Committee request all members and co-opted members of Worthing Borough Council to complete a questionnaire in relation to the Code of Conduct by 31 July 2009;
- that the Committee agree the amended questionnaire with incorporated examples in questions 9 f and g.

10. Action Plan

The Committee considered the Action Plan for 2009/10 outlined by the Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

RESOLVED,

- (1) that the action plan be noted and endorsed;
- (2) that the 2009/10 action plan be updated to include:
 - Item 1 – Progress: Questions sent out by 21 July 2009;
 - Item 2 – Timescale and Notes: Went to Committee 18 June 2009. Progress: change web-site pages by 31 August 2009;
 - Item 3 – Progress: report back to the Committee in 6 months December 2009;
 - Item 4 – Progress: September 2009;
 - Item 6 – Progress: 2008/09 report agreed by Standards Committee and by Council. The report to be published on the web-site. Annual Report for 2009/10 to be brought to Committee in January or February 2010.
 - Item 7 – Progress: report to next meeting;
 - Item 8 - Progress: report to next meeting;
 - Item 9 - Progress: report to next meeting;
 - Item 10 – Progress: report on whether or not a protocol is needed;
 - Item 11 – review at each meeting;
 - Item 12 – quarterly monitoring of training;
 - Item 13 – Review of Assessment Sub-Committee Process – report to next meeting.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm