

Town Hall
Worthing

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Dear Councillor

Standards Committee

A meeting of the Standards Committee will be held in the Committee Suite,
at 6 pm on Wednesday 11 March 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), Dr. David Wiggins, Cpt. Rodney Bilton and
John Evans**

Councillors

**Michael Donin, Vacancy, Heather Mercer, Keith Sunderland, Steve Waight and
Tom Wye**

Substitute Members

Councillors Ann Barlow, James Doyle, Elizabeth Sparkes and Hazel Thorpe

A G E N D A

1. **Minutes**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 12 January 2009.

(Copy attached. These minutes were approved by Council at its meeting on 24 February 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. **Dispensations**

5. **Terms of Reference**

To review the Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee.

(Report attached)

6. **Action Plan**

To consider the Action Plans for 2008/09 and 2009/10.

(Report attached)

7. **Vice-Chairman – recommendation to Council**

To consider whether to make a recommendation to Council.

8. **Officer / Member Protocol**

To review the Council's Officer Member protocol.

(Report attached)

9. **Annual Report**

To agree an annual report for the Standards Committee.

(Report attached)

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**11 March 2009
at 6.00 p.m.**

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

Councillors: Steve Waight and Tom Wye

Also present: Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and
Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for Absence: David Wiggins and Councillors Michael Donin, Heather
Mercer and Keith Sunderland

1. CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed the Standards Committee that a letter of resignation had been received from Dr David Wiggins.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 January 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

5. Dispensations

There were no applications.

6. Terms of Reference

The Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer introduced a report providing a review of the Standards Committee terms of reference.

It was noted that Item 11 of the Standards Committee's Terms of Reference, was not required to come before the Committee. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that this item would be removed as part of the future amendments to the constitution.

RESOLVED, that the Committee noted the contents of the report.

7. Action Plan

The Committee considered the Action Plans for 2008/09 and 2009/10 outlined by the Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

RESOLVED,

- (1) that the action plans be noted and endorsed;
- (2) that the 2009/10 action plan be updated to include:
 - Item 7 – Publicity (Report on no cost options to next meeting of the Committee);
 - Item 8 – Ombudsmen (relating to Item 10 in the Terms of Reference);
 - Item 9 – Filter / Determine / Monitor Complaints (monitor quarterly);
 - Item 10 – Protocols for Members on Partnership Working (consider and possibly adopt over 09/10).
 - Item 11 - Review of the Action Plan

8. Vice-chairman – recommendation to Council

The Committee endorsed the nomination of Capt. Rod Bilton as Vice-chairman of the Standards Committee.

9. Officer / Member Protocol

The Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer introduced a report reviewing the Council's Officer / Member protocol.

The Committee considered the time taken by Officers to respond to Members enquiries and whether this should be the same or quicker than the length of time taken for officers to respond to the public.

The Committee questioned whether there was any guidance available to Members informing them of how they should obtain information from officers?

The Committee were informed that paragraph 39 of the 'Protocol for relationships between Members of the Council and officers' provides guidance for how Members should obtain information from officers.

Cllr Steve Waight proposed an amendment which was seconded by Cllr Tom Wye;

- To align the time limit for responses to Members with the time limit for responses to the general public.

Cllr Steve Waight proposed a second amendment which was seconded by Cllr Tom Wye;

- Remove the sentence 'However, officers should not have unreasonable requests placed on them' from paragraph 40 of the 'Protocol for relationships between Members of the Council and officers'.

The Committee considered the wording of paragraphs 59 to 62 as it was considered that Members were expected to resolve issues with officers without the need for disciplinary action but the same expectation was not placed upon officers.

Cllr Steve Waight proposed a further amendment that was seconded by Cllr Tom Wye:

- That paragraphs 59 to 62 should be amended to place a similar expectation on Members and Officers. The exact wording to be proposed by the Monitoring Officer

RESOLVED,

- that the Committee agreed the proposed amendments to the Member / Officer Protocol;
- that the committee recommended the changes to the Governance and Audit Committee as proposed amendments to the Constitution.

10. Annual Report

The Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer introduced the Annual Report to the Committee.

Members questioned whether members of the Standards Committee should be notified of complaints about Members?

Officers informed the Committee that the initial assessment should be at a low key level. However there is nothing stopping the complainant going to the press and the press publishing their complaint. Likewise the person complained about is not required to keep the matter confidential.

It was suggested that the Improvement and Development Agency (IDEA) appear in full within the report.

The Chairman notified the Committee that the General Purposes Committee made a recommendation at its meeting on 14 July 2008 that the Code of Corporate Governance be referred to the Standards Committee. It was therefore suggested that under section 2.5 of the annual report 'in relation to the Annual Governance statement' should be replaced either by 'in relation to corporate governance' or 'in relation to the Code of Corporate Governance'.

RESOLVED,

- that the Executive Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer bring a report to the next meeting of the Committee setting out the guidance for meetings of Sub-Committees as set out by the Standards Board, detailing;
 - who should be notified that a Sub-Committee meeting is scheduled to take place;
 - how those people should be notified;
- that the Committee agree the annual report of the Standards Committee;
- that the Committee recommend the annual report, as amended, to Council for adoption.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm