

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL AND ESSEX FIRE
AUTHORITY JOINT STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL,
CHELMSFORD, ON 27 APRIL 2011**

Membership

**Appointed by Essex County
Council**

Independent Members:

- * Mr A French (Chairman)
- Mr D Farrow (Vice-Chairman)
- Mr C Jackman

- * Mr Colin Booth

Councillors:

- * R Bass (Chairman of the Council,
ex officio)
- * Mrs M Fisher
- * Mrs E Hart
- * M Mackrory
- * J Pike
- * C Pond
- * D Robinson
- * K Twitchen
- Mrs M Webster
- * Present

**Appointed by Essex Fire
Authority**

Independent Member:

- * Mr M Goodswen

Councillors:

- S McPherson (Thurrock Borough
Council)
- * R Pearson (Essex County Council)
- * Fay Evans (Southend Borough
Council)

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Vivien Door
Alex Hallam
Colin Ismay

Committee Officer
Deputy County Solicitor
Head of Scrutiny and Lead
Governance Officer

12. Membership

The Chairman welcomed Mr Colin Booth to the Committee. His appointment as an Essex County Council Independent Member will be recommended to Council for approval on 10 May 2011.

13. Apologies

The Committee Officer reported apologies from Mr D Farrow, Mr C Jackman and County Councillor M Webster.

14. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest reported.

15. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16. Matters Arising

Minute 11, Ethical Governance Diagnostic Report, the Chairman asked the Head of Scrutiny and Lead Governance Officer to follow up with Margaret Lee, Executive Director for Finance, the matter raised in the resolution.

17. Members Allowance Scheme - Implications for the Standards Committee

The Committee received a report (SC/003/11) on the Implications of the Members Allowance Scheme from Colin Ismay, Head of Scrutiny and Lead Governance Officer.

The Head of Scrutiny and Lead Governance Officer informed the Committee that the report had been taken to the Corporate Governance Steering Board, which was chaired by Councillor Martin, the Leader of the Council. The Group had asked the County Solicitor to investigate the legality of withdrawing the basic allowance. The Board had also asked to see a simplified draft of the Annual Report format.

During a lengthy discussion the following points were made:

- Members suggested that it would be easier to remove the Special Responsibility Allowance for a poor performing Member, but this would usually be removed by the relevant Party Leader. It would be very difficult to remove the basic allowance for poor performing Members;
- The Independent Chairman was concerned that this matter had not progressed significantly since June 2010;
- Members were concerned that legal advice had not been taken earlier;
- Members suggested that the Members Annual reports could help to identify good practice;
- The Deputy Monitoring Officer suggested that there was an opportunity to address some of the issues in the developments of a voluntary Code of Conduct if the Council decided it wished to follow that option;
- Members were concerned that it could be difficult to make a judgement about a Member's involvement in constituency work as opposed to committee attendance.

Resolved:

- i) The Committee agreed the two bullet points under item 2, regarding allowances for Members with a physical disability and Members with care responsibilities;
- ii) That the Members Annual Report could be assessed generally within an agreed format and that a Sub-Committee should be set up to assess these reports;

- iii) That the Committee would consider this matter again when the procedure for Councillors preparing Annual Reports has been approved by Council;
- iv) The Committee should be advised when the legality of withdrawing the basic Members' Allowance has been determined, so that any consequences for the Committee could then be considered.

18. Update on the Future of the Standards Committee Regime

The Committee received an oral update on matters relating to the future of the Standards Committee Regime from Alex Hallam, Deputy County Solicitor.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer reported that there was no further information to report and no information regarding the date that the legislation would be implemented.

19. Date and Time of the Next Meeting

The Committee agreed the meeting dates scheduled for 2011/12 and noted the date of the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 24 May 2011 at 10.00 am in Committee Room 2.

20. Annual Report

The Committee **Agreed** that the Chairman would finalise the report.

21. Recent Complaints

The Deputy Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that a recent complaint which had been Assessed and Reviewed had now been sent to the Local Government Ombudsman for investigation of the process.

Resolved:

That the Deputy Monitoring Officer would inform the Councillor, that the complaint referred to, of the referral to the Local Government Ombudsman.

As there was no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 11.05 am.

Chairman