

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON 6 NOVEMBER 2009**

Membership

Appointed by Essex County Council  
Independent Members:  
\* Professor R M Atkinson (Chairman)  
Mr D Farrow  
\* Mr A French (Vice-Chairman)  
  
Mr C Jackman  
Councillors:  
  
\* C Pond  
\* Mrs M Fisher  
Mrs E Hart (Chairman of the Council, ex officio)  
\* M Mackrory  
\* J Pike  
\* K Twitchen  
R Walters  
Mrs M Webster

Appointed by the Essex Fire Authority  
Independent Member:  
\* Mr M Goodswen  
  
Councillors:  
S McPherson (Thurrock Borough Council)  
R Pearson (Essex County Council)  
D White (Southend Borough Council)

\* Present

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Alex Hallam  
Colin Ismay  
Antoinette Mortley

Deputy County Solicitor  
Governance Manager  
Committee Officer

**31. Apologies**

The Committee Officer reported apologies from County Councillors Mrs E Hart, R Walters and Mrs M Webster and Messrs D Farrow and C Jackman.

**32. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**33. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the deletion of "(Independent Member)" after Councillor Daphne White's name in the list of Membership.

**34. Matters arising**

The Deputy County Solicitor will forward to the Independent Members on the Committee the information relating to indemnity cover whilst acting as a member of the Committee.

It was confirmed that the Standards Board for England is now named "Standards for England" and it was agreed that this was how it would be referred to in all future paperwork.

The Governance Manager had prepared a list of councillors who had attended the recent training sessions for new members on standards and will be in contact with any who had not attended to seek clarification on whether they had received appropriate training from another authority.

**35. Chairman's Report**

The Chairman had nothing he wished to report at this meeting.

**36. The Committee's Annual Report**

The Committee received the final version of its Annual Report as presented to the meeting of Essex County Council on 16 June. It was agreed that the membership shown was accurate at the time the Report was published.

**37. Anonymous Complaints Policy**

The Committee considered report SC/013/09 by the Deputy County Solicitor setting out proposals for a policy in respect of anonymous complaints.

**Resolved:**

That it be the policy of the Committee that anonymous complaints be not entertained except where such a complaint includes documentary and / or photographic evidence which shows a very serious or significant matter, but the Monitoring Officer be authorised to keep the identity of a complainant confidential where he / she is of the opinion that it is in the public interest so to do.

**38. Standards Board for England Guidance**

The Committee considered report SC/014/09 by the Deputy County Solicitor setting out the latest Standards for England guidance on gifts and hospitality, personal and prejudicial interests and lobbying.

The Committee was of the opinion that the guidance would be a useful reminder for all members.

**Resolved:**

That all Members be provided with a copy of the Standards for England guidance with contact details for the Governance Manager and Deputy County Solicitor to go to for advice when needed.

**39. Sub-Committee Terms of Reference**

The Committee considered report SC/015/09 by the Deputy County Solicitor revisiting and proposing amendments to the terms of reference of the Review and Assessment Sub-Committees and proposing terms of reference for a hearings sub-committee.

At the suggestion of the Chairman, the Committee agreed that consideration of the outcome of an investigation should be a matter for the hearings sub-committee and not the Assessment Sub-Committee as proposed by the Deputy County Solicitor. This meant that the proposed terms of reference for the two sub-committees need to be amended to reflect the changes and the hearings sub-committee be named the Consideration and Hearings Sub-Committee to reflect the extended role. Other minor amendments to the terms of reference of all three Sub-Committees were proposed. The make-up of the membership of the Sub-Committees was also discussed.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the terms of reference of the Assessment, Review and Consideration and Hearing Sub-Committees as amended at the meeting be approved.
- (2) That the membership of the Sub-Committees be drawn from all members of the Committee regardless of which authority the member complained of represents.
- (3) That the Deputy County Solicitor bring to a future meeting a draft procedure for the Consideration and Hearing Sub-Committee.

**40. Annual Assembly of Standards Committees 12-13 October 2009**

The Committee received report SC/016/09 by the Deputy County Solicitor providing feedback on the Annual Conference from herself, Tony French and Michael Goodswen who all attended the Conference.

**41. Publishing information to the Council's Web site**

The Governance Manager advised the Committee on progress in replacing the package for publishing Agenda, Decisions and Member information to the web site.

**42. Forward Look**

The Committee considered report SC/017/09 and agreed the Forward Look subject to the addition of items on Benchmarking and the Publication of Reports.

**43. Date and Time of Future Meeting(s)**

The Committee was advised that the next meeting was scheduled for 4 December 2009. The Governance Manager agreed to notify all members of a schedule of proposed meetings.

**44. Exclusion of the Public****Resolved:**

That the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

**County Council Return Cases**

(Paragraphs 1 and 2 information relating to an individual)

**(Business taken in private)**

**45. Standards Board for England Return Essex County Council Return - Cases**

The Committee noted report SC/018/09 by the Deputy County Solicitor which provided an update on all the cases recorded on the annual return to the Standards Board for England.

Chairman  
4 December 2009