

Standards Committee

Monday, 16 April 2012

7.30pm

Present:

Mr A Flaherty (Chair)

Cllrs: Lesley Boycott
 Brian Francis
 David Hurley
 John Loughlin
 Peter Rayner
 David Turner

Mike Hayley
Jackie Denton

Assistant Director (Governance & Law)
Community Engagement Officer

9. Minutes

Minute 8 – 8.6.2011

The Assistant Director (Governance & Law) advised that as the Monitoring Officer he has not yet received a letter from the Information Commissioner's Office requesting payment for Member registrations.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2011 were signed by the Chair.

10. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

11. The Localism Act 2011 and the Standards Regime

The regulatory role of Standards for England ceased to exist on 31 January 2012 and from that date they no longer have powers to accept new referrals from local Standards Committees or conduct investigations into complaints against Members. Their role in providing guidance on the existing Standards framework also ceased.

The replacement scheme has yet to be defined but we will have to adopt a code of some form. Although we have an option to have a Standards Committee it will be different to the current Committee as it is suggested that we have an ordinary Committee of the Council, the same as any other which will have to be politically balanced unlike the current statutory Committee.

A number of draft codes dealing with Member conduct have been produced by various national bodies and it is anticipated we will adopt a Kent-wide code. The Kent Solicitors

Group is setting up a sub-group to look at the proposed codes and agree a code which can be adopted across Kent.

The current statutory Standards Committee will need to remain in place until 1 July 2012 or when the new regime comes in. The Monitoring Officer therefore suggested that Annual Council in May should re-appoint the existing Committee until July and at the same time identify a new Ordinary Standards Committee to take over from the Statutory Committee from July onwards.

The reason for the need to have two Committees appointed at the May meeting is that the new Standards Committee will need to be politically balanced which will affect the overall political balance across all the Council's Committees. To avoid the need to politically re-balance all the Committees in July it is advised that an Ordinary Standards Committee be established at the May meeting in line with the political balance rules.

Recommended that at the Annual Meeting of the Council:-

- (1) the Statutory Committee be re-appointed to serve until the 1 July 2012 or until the new regime is in place whichever is the earlier; and**
- (2) a new Standards Committee be appointed to succeed the Statutory Committee in due course.**

12. Amendments to the Council Procedure Rules and Access To Information Procedure Rules in the interests of efficiency

The report recommends that the changes set out below are adopted by the Council.

Paragraph 5.2 (2) (a) of the Council Procedure Rules allows the Chair of a Committee to reserve an item or items for debate at Council where the papers accompanying the summons do not in his or her opinion give an accurate statement of that body's proceedings and could lead to minutes being amended by Members who were not present at the Committee meeting. It is therefore proposed that this provision be removed.

Paragraph 9.2 of the Council Procedure Rules relates to the summoning of Members to meetings by post or by a hard copy summons left at a Member's usual place of residence. It is proposed that Members be summoned by e-mail to realise significant savings. Hard copies will still be available for collection by Members.

Recommended that the changes be approved by Full Council.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.20pm.