

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 4.00 pm on 22 MARCH 2010**

Present:- S Brady – Chairman (Independent person).
Councillors C D Down and R M Lemon (Uttlesford Members).
Councillors C Clarke, R Merrion and M Sullivan (Town and
Parish Councils).

Officers in attendance:- R Auty (Head of Community Engagement), M Cox
(Democratic Services Officer) and M J Perry (Assistant Chief
Executive).

S31 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Ruth Whitlam, Mark Hall and
Councillors C Cant and K Eden.

S32 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2010 were approved as a
correct record subject to the correction of a typographical error in minute S25
and two typographical errors in minute S28.

S33 BUSINESS ARISING

i) Minute S27 - Branding the Standards Committee

The Task Group had met and decided that it would be suitable for the
Standards Committee to adopt a Mission Statement. The form of words
suggested were as follows

*To promote and regulate high standards of integrity and conduct by all parish,
town and district councillors.*

Whilst there was some concern at the number of words in this statement,
members agreed that it should be adopted. Officers would consider the most
appropriate way of publicising the statement in the public domain. It would be
included on the Standards Committee section of the website, added to the
template for letters from the Chairman of the Committee and the Monitoring
Officer and could be included on an email template when the outlook facility
was upgraded later in the year.

RESOLVED that the Mission Statement for the Standards
Committee be adopted and be publicised on the lines set out above.

ii) Minute S28 –Assistance to parishes

As agreed at the last meeting, the Assistant Chief Executive had written to a
sample group of 12 parish councils about members of the Standards

Committee attending and addressing a parish council meeting. The response had so far been disappointing but members still felt that there was a need for parish councils to be updated on the Code of Conduct and on the role of the Standards Committee. It was therefore suggested that members should attend the parish council meetings, and if not invited to speak, then just attend as an observer. The visits would need to be arranged for the cycle after the annual meetings when the parish councils would be conducting normal business.

The Assistant Chief Executive had prepared a list of the main issues covered by the Standards Committee for members to refer to at the parish meetings, and he would circulate this to the Committee.

RESOLVED that a schedule setting out the meeting dates for the parish councils be prepared for the next meeting.

S34 **PROMOTING DEMOCRACY**

The Committee received a report that outlined the council's responsibility to promote democracy and the how it performed in relation to the key indicators for involvement in the democratic process.

It was noted that one initiative in this area was local democracy week in October and the council intended to participate in this. Activities in previous years had included councillor visits to local schools, mock elections and political speed dating. The Committee supported these initiatives.

S35 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered matters to be included in the work programme for the next 12 months. It was agreed that the following issues could be considered at future meetings.

- The Annual Report to a Full Council meeting.
- How to monitor the observance of the Code of Conduct.
- Alternative ways of appointing representative of town and parish councils.
- The implications of the proposed changes to the district council governance arrangements from 2011.
- Guidance on the amendment to the Licensing Act 2003 to permit members to make representations in their own right with regard to licenses and licensing applications.
- Draft guidance for councillors on how to deal with confidential items (arising from minute S38)

S36 **THE FIRST TIER TRIBUNAL (LOCAL GOVERNMENT STANDARDS IN ENGLAND)**

The Committee received a report which gave details of the transfer of the work of the Adjudication Panel for England into the unified tribunal structure.

S37

RECENT DECISIONS OF THE FIRST TIER TRIBUNAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND

The Committee received details of the tribunal cases that had been published since the last meeting.

S38

CONFIDENTIALITY

Members received a presentation on changes to the Code of Conduct in connection with the issue of information received in confidence.

During the discussion it became clear that that there was still some uncertainty about this issue and particularly the application of these rules to town and parish councils. Further guidance on this matter would be welcomed.

RESOLVED that draft guidance for district, town and parish councils on the issue of information received in confidence be prepared for a future meeting of the committee.

The meeting ended at 5.50pm