

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 13th March, 2007

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Members: Mr S. Gillies (Independent Chair), Mrs. A. Hale (Independent),
Councillors T.G.M. Kent, CC, Mrs J.E. Lloyd and M. Notley

In Attendance:

Start/End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.45pm

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no apologies for absence and no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - Thursday, 9th March, 2006**

Minutes attached

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Thursday, 9th March 2006 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record, subject to the word 'Council' being replaced by the word 'Committee' and the year of commencement to be changed to 2006/07 in Item 3.

3 **REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Report attached

The Borough Solicitor submitted a report requesting the Committee to determine whether or not the Register of Members' Interests should be placed on the Council's internet site.

It was noted that, if approved, Register entries would continue to be made on hard copies and, as the law currently stood, the Register of Gifts and Hospitality for Members was not required to be open to public inspection and would not, therefore, be placed on the internet.

It was RESOLVED that the Register of Members' Interests be placed on the Council's internet site provided that signatures are removed from any documentation.

4 **PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT**

Report attached

The Borough Solicitor submitted a report on the Government's draft Statutory Instrument containing a revised Code of Conduct and commentary. The Council had been invited to respond, and a copy of SBC's response had been circulated to the meeting.

Members discussed the more significant changes to the Code and it was RESOLVED:

(1) That it be noted that the Government intends to introduce the new Code in May 2007 and that the final Code would be brought back to the Committee's June meeting for consideration.

(2) That the Borough Solicitor arranges training seminars for all Members as soon as practicable after the introduction of the new Code, this training to include updates on the Register of Members' Interests and the Register of Gifts and Hospitality for Members.

**5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH BILL-
CHANGES TO THE ETHICAL STANDARDS REGIME FOR MEMBERS**
Report attached

The Borough Solicitor submitted a report informing the Committee of proposals to change the arrangements for dealing with the receipt and determination of allegations that a Member has breached the Code of Conduct.

Members expressed concerns regarding how such arrangements would work on a practical level, particularly in respect of smaller Authorities.

It was RESOLVED:-

(1) That the proposals to change arrangements for dealing with the receipt and determination of allegations that a Member has breached the Code of Conduct be noted.

(2) That the Committee's concerns be noted relating to the impracticalities of smaller Authorities dealing with allegations about their Members' conduct.

6 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

STANDARDS BOARD'S ROAD SHOW

It was agreed that 3 places should be booked for 28th June 2007.

TRAINING

It was noted that more training would be available after the amendment to the Code of Conduct.

HERTS FORUM OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES

The next meeting would be on the 21st March – for Independent Members only.

PREVIEW OF REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS AND HOSPITALITY

The Chair was awaiting comments from the Borough Solicitor.

OMBUDSMAN REPORT

The Borough Solicitor would bring this to the next meeting.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Self-assessment would be done by the Committee at its next meeting.

7 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

None.

8 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR