

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 6 June 2012

Time: 6.00 p.m.

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Stevenage

Present: Allen Holland – Independent non-elected member (Chair), Ananda Hale – Independent non-elected member, Emmanuel Mensah – Independent non-elected Member, and Councillors D Kissane Mrs J Lloyd, L Martin-Haugh, J Mead, M Notley and B Underwood.

Start/End Time: Start Time: 6.00 p.m.
End Time: 6.50 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were neither apologies for absence nor declarations of interest.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference be noted.

3. MINUTES – 5 MARCH 2012

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. NEW STANDARDS REGIME FOR MEMBERS

The Borough Solicitor presented a report to detailing the terms of a new code of conduct for Members and related procedures for the Committee to consider.

The Committee was advised that the timetable for implementation was unclear although it remained the Government's intention for the changes to be introduced on 1 July 2012.

The Committee was further advised that there would be a statutory requirement for the Council to draft a code for Members' behaviour and that it would require a meeting of Council for the code and associated procedures to be adopted.

Concerns were expressed that under the old regime Members nominated to serve on Outside Bodies had been excluded from meetings to discuss support for these bodies, however the Committee was advised that, if suitable provisions were agreed by Council, the proposed new arrangements could allow for their attendance at such meetings.

Concerns were also expressed that the proposed process for the declaration of gifts and hospitality might prove tricky to administer and it was commented that consideration should be given to public perception should the limit for declaration be increased.

In reply to a question the Committee was advised that once the relevant Statutory Instrument had been received, and the new code agreed, all Members would be invited to attend briefing sessions on the new arrangements.

The Committee was further advised that a decision had yet to been taken on the future role of the Standards Committee although Members were minded for it to continue.

Members asked a number of detailed questions about the proposed new arrangements for dealing with complaints to which the Officer responded.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That it be recommended to Council that the form and content of the Code of Conduct for Members be based upon the existing code as detailed in appendix 3 to the report.
2. That it be recommended to Council that the £25 limit on gifts and hospitality remain unchanged.
3. That it be recommended to Council that the current regime whereby Members with prejudicial interests are required to leave the room and not take part in any debate or vote be continued.
4. That it be recommended to Council that provisions are made to allow Members who have disclosed an interest at a meeting to attend and vote on a matter in respect of financial and other support to voluntary or community bodies to which the Member has been appointed by the Council.
5. That the adoption of arrangements for the investigation and making decisions on complaints that Members have breached the Code of Conduct, as detailed at appendix 4 to the report, be approved and recommended to Council.

6. That it be noted that the Council will have the ability to review and revise these arrangements at any time.

5. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None

6. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not required.

PART II

7. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None