

Medway Council
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

13 MARCH 2002

7.00pm to 7.35pm

RECORD OF THE MEETING

PRESENT:

Committee members: Councillor Buckwell, Councillor Coomber (parish representative), Michael Coulson (independent member), Councillor Jefferies, Alan Povey (independent member), Councillor Mrs Julie Shaw and Laura Wren (independent member)

In attendance: Councillor Swaby

4136 RECORD OF THE MEETING

The record of the meeting held on 10 January 2002 was agreed and signed by the chair noting that Councillor Swaby (Allhallows Parish Council) was in attendance. It was agreed that the names of those in attendance at future meetings would be noted.

In response to a request for clarification in respect of minute 3987 (Members' Code of Conduct) the committee was advised that the co-opted members on the Youth and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been invited to attend one of the briefing sessions.

4137 CODE OF CONDUCT – PROGRAMME FOR TRAINING

Discussion:

The monitoring officer presented a report that sought agreement to the proposed training programme for both parish and Medway councillors. Five sessions had been arranged and letters had been sent to all councillors, parish councillors, clerks and co-opted members with voting rights asking them to indicate a first and second preference. Two of the sessions were to be held in Hoo and would therefore have a parish focus although any session could be attended by any member.

It was proposed that the two sessions in Hoo would be led by Keith Stevens, until recently the interim monitoring officer, and the other three sessions

Standards Committee, 13 March 2002

would be led by Mark Bowen, the monitoring officer. The monitoring officer confirmed that he would attend all sessions.

The suggested programme for each session was split into four main parts:

- general legislative framework and background
- case studies (including those specific to parishes)
- the role of the monitoring officer
- questions

It was agreed that the training would include a checklist of actions that the parish clerk must ensure are taken by the relevant deadlines and would identify ongoing tasks to be undertaken in order to ensure compliance with the code by parish councillors. The committee recognised that the parish clerks would require additional support given the onerous and specific legal responsibility that flowed from the application of the code.

The committee was advised of the number of responses received to the invitation to attend the briefing sessions and that a letter would be sent the following week to all those who had not responded, encouraging them to attend. The committee asked that this letter emphasised the importance of attending one of the sessions and the implications of not signing up to the code of conduct. Officers were asked to contact the group whips to suggest that the letter should be sent out jointly with them.

The independent members of the committee undertook to ensure that one of them attended each session and that they would all attend the Council meeting on 17 April at which the code of conduct would be adopted. Officers were asked to consider a mechanism whereby the independent members could be introduced to the Council at that meeting.

The monitoring officer asked those present to advise him of any additional issues they would like included in the training programme.

Decision:

That the proposed training programme is approved.

4138 NOMINATIONS FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE CONFERENCE

Discussion:

The monitoring officer introduced a report that advised the committee of the forthcoming Standards Committee Conference on 20 May 2002. The anticipated topics for consideration were outlined. The committee was informed that the Standards Board had limited the number of places to three delegates per authority. It was suggested that the attendees should be the monitoring officer, the chair of the committee and an independent member. In this instance the chair of the committee was an independent member. Recognising that not all members of the committee could attend it was requested that every member received a copy of the conference pack.

Decision:

That the monitoring officer, the chair of the committee and the parish councillor representative are authorised to attend the Standards Board for England Conference in Birmingham on 20 May 2002. Councillor Mrs Julie Shaw is authorised to attend if the parish councillor representative is not available.

4139 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The chair drew the committee's attention to a number of dates that had been circulated for consultation for the 2002/2003 municipal year.

Chair

Date