

Medway Council
STANDARDS COMMITTEE
27 JUNE 2002
7pm to 8.20pm
RECORD OF THE MEETING

PRESENT:

Committee members: Councillors Buckwell, Councillor Coomber (parish representative), Michael Coulson (independent member), Councillor Jefferies, Alan Povey (independent member).

In attendance: Councillor Swaby

4440 RECORD OF THE MEETING

The record of the meeting held on 22 May 2002 was agreed and signed by the chair as correct.

The committee was advised that, as requested at the previous meeting, the monitoring officer had written to group whips informing them of which members had not attended the code of conduct training. It was noted that further training sessions might be required in order that members who had not been able to attend the previous sessions could receive the training.

4441 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Julie Shaw and Laura Wren.

4442 UPDATE ON THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Discussion:

The monitoring officer presented a report that sought agreement to include the advice on declarations of interest for parish councillors as appended to the report, in the guidance previously discussed and to agree to its circulation to all Medway councillors and parish clerks. The Committee was advised that the further guidance gave information for parish councillors on who would be considered a friend for the purpose of the code and the current guidance from the National Standards Board in relation to this issue.

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Decision:

That the advice for parish councillors is included in the guidance discussed at the meeting on 22 May and that the guidance is circulated to all Medway councillors and parish clerks.

4443 CONSULTATION - PROPOSED LOCAL INVESTIGATION AND DETERMINATION OF MISCONDUCT ALLEGATIONS

Discussion:

The monitoring officer introduced a report that gave a response to the consultation paper on local investigation and determination of misconduct allegations. The Committee was advised of the general comments on the five stages received by the monitoring officer from members of the Standards Committee and members discussed the response to the report and gave further additions that should be included in the response.

Decision:

- (a) That the proposed response is endorsed and the monitoring officer to submit it in response to the consultation on behalf of the Committee taking into account the following additional comments made at the meeting.
 - (i) That a standard complaints form is drawn up for complainants to complete and that the monitoring officer should report all local settlements to the Standards Board.
 - (ii) That until a decision has been announced with regard to a complaint, details of that complaint should remain confidential.
 - (iii) That the appointment of a deputy-monitoring officer in instances of absence and whereby conflicts of interest occur should be investigated and if necessary cases should be referred back to the ESO.
 - (iv) That all cases should be dealt with expeditiously and once the ethical standards officer commences an investigation the ESO should complete it and should not be able to return investigations to the monitoring officer and the Standards Committee for completion, as this would result in a duplication of work.
- (b) That the relevant portfolio holder is informed of the potential costs of investigations when more information is available.

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4444 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Discussion:

The monitoring officer advised that the future work programme was dependant upon the government response to the consultation document.

Members were advised that the internal auditor had asked for details of hospitality offered to members.

Decision:

That members should not have to declare hospitality that has been offered but has not been accepted, as there has been no personal gain and it would be difficult to judge the costs of hospitality declined.

4445 GUIDANCE VIDEO FROM THE NATIONAL STANDARDS BOARD

Members were shown a video from the National Standards Board containing information regarding the Code of Conduct.

Chair

Date