

Medway Council
Meeting of Standards Committee
Wednesday, 7 July 2010
7.00pm to 8.00pm

Record of the meeting

Present: Councillors: O'Brien, Shaw and Smith

Independent Members:

Dance, Gray, Sanford, Shah and Sindrey

Parish Council Representatives:

Buckwell, Coomber and Marsh

In Attendance: Peter Holland and Deborah Upton

134 Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Janet Gray was elected Chairman and Tony Dance was elected Vice Chairman for the forthcoming municipal year.

135 Record of the meetings:

The record of the meetings held on 7 April 2010 and the Joint Meeting of All Committees was signed as correct subject to Parish Councillor Coomber being identified as a Parish Council Representative in the record of the meeting on 7 April 2010.

136 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Burt and Charles Thompson (Independent Member).

137 Declarations of interest

Peter Holland, Committee Co-ordinator declared a personal interest, in accordance with section 15.4 of the Council's Protocol on Member/Employee Relations, in agenda item 6, Politically Restricted Posts, and his post was politically restricted.

138 Politically Restricted Posts

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Housing and Corporate Services introduced a report that set out the changes introduced by the Local Democracy, Economic, Development and Construction Act 2009 which have been considered by the Employment Matters Committee and sought Members views on the proposed amendments to the current list of Politically Restricted posts.

Members were informed that the Standards Committee would be responsible for considering any individual appeals against inclusion on the revised list of politically restricted posts and the committee's views were being sought before affected staff were consulted. Following consultation the final list of exempted posts will then be reported back to the Standards Committee for information and referred on to the Employment Matters Committee for implementation.

Members asked that the report clearly stated that there was no restriction on officers becoming Parish Councillors as long as they are not a party candidate and asked that it clarified what restrictions were placed on political assistants especially with regard to their private lives.

Members asked that in the interim there is a procedure put in place to ensure that as officers pass above Spinal Column Point 44 they are informed of the political restrictions.

Decision:

The Committee agreed that:

1. That the existing remuneration level of SCP 44 and above is retained and all posts are included in the list of Politically Restricted Posts for the interim period whilst assessment of sensitive posts and consultation is undertaken and a further report is brought back for final agreement to this Committee.
2. That the revised legislation is noted and that the specified posts set out in the legislation and the posts set out in Section 5.3 above continue to be regarded as Politically Sensitive Posts.
3. That further analysis be carried out with a view to limiting automatic inclusion into political restrictions for posts Graded at PO3 and Service Manager posts and to consult service managers on posts at lower grades to ensure sensitive posts are identified in accordance with the definition of sensitive posts.
4. Members asked that the report clearly stated that there was no restriction on officers becoming Parish Councillors, as long as they are not a party candidate, and asked that it clarified what restrictions were placed on political assistants especially with regard to their private lives.

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5. Members asked that in the interim a procedure is put in place to ensure that as officers pass above Spinal Column Point 44 they are informed of the political restrictions.

139 Latest news from Standards for England

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Housing and Corporate Services, introduced a report that advised the Committee of the latest information in relation to Standards for England (SfE) and the implications of the proposed Decentralisation and Localism Bill as announced in the Queen's speech on 25 May 2010.

The Committee was informed that the proposed Decentralisation and Localism Bill would include proposals to "abolish the Standards Board regime" and that the SfE requirement for quarterly monitoring returns had been postponed and the Standards for England 2010 Annual Assembly had been cancelled.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

140 Work Programme

Discussion:

The Monitoring Officer presented a report that set out the proposed work programme previously agreed by the Committee for 2010/11.

The Monitoring Officer agreed that the report on the protocol for dealing with the media would go to the 8 September Standards Committee meeting and members asked that she write to all Members including Parish Clerks clarifying the investigation process.

Following a review of Standards Committee procedures, Members were asked to consider a proposal that when a consideration meeting of the Standards Hearing Sub Committee is convened that where possible the same panel is convened to deal with any consequential hearing and if this is not possible that members are then appointed in the agreed alphabetical order.

Decision:

The Committee agreed:

1. That the report on the protocol for dealing with the media would go to the 8 September Standards Committee meeting and members asked that the Monitoring Officer write to all Members including Parish Clerks clarifying the investigation process.

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2. That when a consideration meeting of the Standards Hearing Sub Committee is convened that where possible the same panel is convened to deal with any consequential hearing and if this is not possible that members are then appointed in the agreed alphabetical order.

Chairman

Date:

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