

Medway Council
Meeting of Standards Committee
Wednesday, 15 June 2011
7.00pm to 7.21pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

Present: Councillors: O'Brien, Shaw and Smith

Independent Members:

Dance, Shah and Sindrey

Parish Council Representatives:

Parish Councillors Buckwell, Coomber and Marsh

In Attendance: Angela Drum, Deputy Monitoring Officer
Julie Keith, Head of Democratic Services
Duncan Milne, Investigating Officer
Teri Reynolds, Democratic Services Officer

69 Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Janet Gray was elected as Chairman and Anthony Dance was elected as Vice-Chairman for 2011/12.

70 Record of meeting

The record of the Standards Committee meeting held on 23 March 2011 and the record of the joint meeting of all committees held on 25 May 2011 were signed by the Chairman as correct.

71 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Janet Gray, Chris Sanford and Councillor Stamp.

72 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

73 Declarations of interest

Parish Councillor Buckwell declared a personal interest in item 6 (work programme) as in relation to cases DU/MO/123 and DU/MO/126, it was likely he would be called as a witness if these were discussed at a full hearing. He also declared a personal interest in item 7 (guidance on representing the Council on outside bodies) in that he was a Council representative on the "Medway Queen" Preservation Society. Parish Councillor Buckwell retained his right to speak and vote on the items.

Parish Councillor Coomber declared a personal interest in item 6 (work programme) as in relation to cases DU/MO/123 and DU/MO/126, it was likely he would be called as a witness if these were discussed at a full hearing and retained his right to speak and vote on the item.

Parish Councillor Marsh declared a personal interest in item 7 (guidance on representing the Council on outside bodies) in that he was Parish Councillor Buckwell's deputy on the "Medway Queen" Preservation Society and retained his right to speak and vote on the item.

Councillor O'Brien declared a personal interest in item 7 (guidance on representing the Council on outside bodies) in that he was a School Governor at St Margaret's Infant School and was a Council representative on Parkwood Youth Centre Management Committee. Councillor O'Brien retained his right to speak and vote on the item.

Councillor Shaw declared a personal interest in item 7 (guidance on representing the Council on outside bodies) in that she was a School Governor at All Saints Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School and was a Trustee of Chatham Charities. Councillor Shaw retained her right to speak and vote on the item.

Councillor Smith declared a personal interest in item 7 (guidance on representing the Council on outside bodies) in that she was a School Governor at Barnsole Federated Governing Body and The Robert Napier School and was also a Member of the Corporate Parenting Group. Councillor Smith retained her right to speak and vote on the item.

74 Work Programme

Discussion:

The Deputy Monitoring Officer updated the committee that in relation to case DU/MO/117, the report was at the draft stage and would therefore be scheduled for a 'consideration' Hearing Sub-Committee in July 2011. She added that in relation to cases DU/MO/123 and DU/MO/126 the Monitoring Officer was seeking clarification as to whether the circumstances of the civil dispute were the same as the grounds relating to the complaints.

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A Member then asked the Deputy Monitoring Officer how many complaints were dealt with by the Monitoring Officer before being reported to the Referrals Sub-Committee of the Standards Committee. In response the Officer explained that once a complaint was made formal it was then reported to the Referrals Sub-Committee and she confirmed that the Monitoring Officer had very little discretion to resolve a formal complaint which fell within the Committee's remit in any other way, however, she undertook to ask the Monitoring Officer to feedback on numbers of issues that were resolved by the Monitoring Officer before they became formal complaints.

A Member also asked what sanctions could be given to subject members of complaints that were no longer elected Members of the Council or a Parish Council. The Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that the only sanction that could be given in this case was censure.

Decision:

The committee agreed to note the report.

75 Guidance on representing the Council on outside bodies

Discussion:

The Head of Democratic Services introduced the report, explaining that the guidance had been prepared as Medway had a number of new Councillors following the local elections in May 2011 and therefore it was important for these and all members to understand the expectations and obligations of representing the Council on outside bodies.

In response to a question about the structure of the guidance and the level of detail relating to Directors and Trustees the Committee was advised that one key objective of the guidance was to explain to Councillors the implications of accepting an appointment as a Director or Trustee and how to reconcile potentially conflicting obligations and duties.

The committee requested that the guidance is issued to all the people appointed to outside bodies by the Council as some are not elected Councillors. Officers were also asked to incorporate advice recently issued to members who have been appointed to serve on Youth Club Management Committees.

Decision:

The committee agreed that comments be invited from the Group Leaders before the guidance is finalised and issued to all Councillors, subject to amendments being made to incorporate the comments from the Standards Committee.

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76 Request for dispensation

Discussion:

The Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced the report and clarified to the committee that dispensation could be granted for a maximum of four years and that and that while dispensation was in place, there was not a requirement to notify the Council when applicable.

Decision:

The committee agreed that dispensations to take part in decision making relating to the St Mary Hoo Parish Council Conservation Area/Nature Reserve is granted to Parish Councillors Mrs Heyburn, Bill Budd and Paul Hassell for a four year period.

Chairman

Date:

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