

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT
STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 21 OCTOBER 2003
REPORT FROM THE BOROUGH SOLICITOR

FOR NOTING

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

REPORT TITLE : **MEETING OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND MONITORING OFFICERS OF THE NORTH WEST LONDON BOROUGH**

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This is a report from the Borough Solicitor to the Standards Committee following the Chair of this Committee's suggestion that Brent initiates a meeting of the North West London Borough Standard Committee Members, Monitoring Officers and Supporting Officers.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members note the details of the event.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. Costs of the event will be met from existing training budgets.

4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct staffing implications.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In May 2002, the Council adopted a new Constitution incorporating the Brent Members Code of Conduct. It also established the current Standards Committee pursuant to requirements in Part III of the Local Government Act 2000.
- 5.2 In May 2003 the Standards Board for England issued guidance to Members on how to register and declare interests, and register gifts and hospitality. This was followed by the *Local Authorities (Code of Conduct)(Local Determination) Regulations 2003* in force as at 30 June 2003. The implications of these regulations have already been reported to this committee at its last meeting. On 14th July 2003 the Standards Board of England issued guidance on these regulations.
- 5.2 The Guidance recommends that Standards Committees should be familiar with the regulations and have effective procedures in place to make sure that they can determine cases fairly and consistently.
- 5.3 One of the purposes of the meeting between North West boroughs would be to discuss a consistent approach to holding hearings brought before Standards Committees. Members

will also have an opportunity to discuss issues with a Senior Policy Advisor from the Standards Board for England.

6.0. DETAIL

- 6.1. In August 2003, officers and the Chair of this committee began informal discussions on the possibility of meeting with other standards committee members, supporting officers and monitoring officers locally.
- 6.2. The idea behind such an event would be for Standards Committee Members to share experiences and common problems. It was also envisaged that the event would be an opportunity for Standards Committee Members to familiarise themselves with the regulations and procedures as recommended by the July 2003 Guidance issued by the Standards Board for England.
- 6.3. In addition, it was suggested that a senior policy advisor of the Standards Board for England be invited to address Standards Committee members at the event to discuss the Guidance and answer questions raised by Members and Monitoring Officers alike.
- 6.4. In September 2003, Brent officers raised the possibility of holding an event with officers in the boroughs in the north west informal alliance namely, Harrow, Ealing, Hillingdon, Hammersmith and Fulham and Hounslow. The Standards Board for England was also contacted.
- 6.5. Considerable interest was shown by most of the above boroughs and the Chair is now in the process of sending invitations to all the Monitoring Officers, Supporting Officers and Standards Committee Members of those boroughs.
- 6.6. The event is scheduled to take place on 13th November 2003 at the Tower Conference Centre (College of North West London). Senior Policy Advisor of the Standards Board for England, Anne Rehill, has kindly agreed to address Members and Monitoring Officers on:
 - i) the Role of Independent Members;
 - ii) Local Determinations;
 - iii) Other Functions of Standards Committees; and
 - iv) Taking things forward.
- 6.7. Anne Rehill joined the Standards Board for England in April 2002 and leads a team providing advice and developing guidance on the code of conduct and associated legislation. Prior to joining the Board Anne worked in local government for 12 years initially as a Town Planner in the London Borough of Harrow and Harlow District Council, where she was seconded to a corporate team to work on local government review. Later she worked as a corporate policy officer in the London Borough of Enfield. Before joining the Board she was a senior policy officer for the London Borough of Redbridge.
- 6.8. A programme will be sent to Members closer to the event date. The evening will include a light finger buffet with refreshments. It is envisaged that the event will last approximately two hours.

7.0 Background Information

- Local Authorities (Code of Conduct)(Local Determination) Regulations 2003;
- May 2003 Guidance: How do I register and declare interests and register gifts and hospitality?
- July 2003 Guidance: Standards Committee Determinations – Guidance for monitoring officers and Standards Committees.

Any persons wishing to inspect the papers in connection with the above proposals should contact Helen Keep at:-

Town Hall Annexe
Forty Lane, Wembley, Middx HA9 9HD
Tel: 020 8937 1368

Terry Osborne
Borough Solicitor