

**NOTES OF AN INQUORATE MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 8th June 2005 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: John Mann (Chair, Independent Member) and Nav Mandair (Vice-Chair, Independent Member)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hughes.

1. Quorum

At the start of the meeting only John Mann and Nav Mandair were present and it was established that the other members of the Committee would not be attending, meaning the meeting would be inquorate. The two members present agreed to consider the business on the agenda and submit their comments.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Deputations

None.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 6th April 2005

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th April 2005 were regarded as a true and accurate record.

5. Matters Arising

None.

6. Review of the Register of Members' Interests and the Register of Gifts and Hospitality

A report updating the Committee on the activities following the audit of the Register of Members' Interests and the Register of Gifts and Hospitality had been circulated.

The report was noted.

7. Declarations in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality

A report informing the Committee of the declarations of interest and declarations of gifts and hospitality made in the period since the last Monitoring Officer's report in July 2004 had been circulated in

accordance with the recent recommendation from the Head of Audit and Investigation.

The report was noted.

8. Local Investigations

The Local Authorities (Code of Conduct) (Local Determination) (Amendment) Regulations 2004 make provision for local monitoring officers to investigate allegations of misconduct by members of relevant authorities, and to enable authorities' Standards Committees to make determinations following reports into such breaches made by Monitoring Officers. These regulations came into force on 4th November 2005 and a report on them had been circulated to the Committee.

It was clarified that if the Committee disagreed with a conclusion in the Monitoring Officer's report in a particular case that there was no case to answer, this would not necessarily prevent the Committee from subsequently hearing the case.

It was confirmed that the Monitoring Officer could appoint officers from outside the Council to carry out investigations into the conduct of councillors and co-opted members of the Council if she felt this to be appropriate. The view of the members present was that this should be made more explicit in future reports.

The report was noted.

9. Twinning Update

The latest draft of the twinning guidance had been circulated to the Committee. Other members including the former Mayor and current Mayor had also been consulted on the draft.

The aim of the new guidance was to ensure that twinning activity supported by the Council was of a high quality and made effective use of resources.

A paper on the assessment of the objectives was tabled. John Mann stated that he had received representations from the current Mayor and Councillor J Moher. These stated that the protocol was too restrictive and complained that there was a lack of resources to promote and follow up any meaningful exchanges. John Mann acknowledged that there was a gap between the aspirations of the protocol and the limited twinning activity that took place. Nevertheless he explained that following this discussion, he would reply to the Mayor and Councillor Moher pointing out that the Standards Committee could only work within its terms of reference which covered the production of such

protocols and that if they had concerns about the effectiveness of the twinning arrangements they should take them up in the appropriate place.

The report was noted.

10. Monitoring Officer's Annual Report

The annual report of the Monitoring Officer had been circulated to the Committee, the last report having been submitted to the Committee in July 2004. The report gave an update on issues concerning member conduct and other issues which had, or would soon be, considered by the Standards Committee and the work of the Monitoring Officer during the past year.

It was requested that an item on the use by councillors of their personal web pages and the acceptable boundaries within which they may operate be added to the programme and submitted to the next meeting of the Committee along with the re-submission of the annual report.

11. Standards Board for England – Borough Statistics

A report from the Monitoring Officer providing statistics regarding the number of decisions in respect of complaints made to the Standards Board for England specifically in reference to London boroughs had been circulated to the Committee.

It was noted that the report would be forwarded to the Leaders of the political groups in line with the responsibility to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members including any co-opted members.

12. Monitoring Officer – oral report

The members present were informed of the outcome of the Adjudications Panel's consideration of the case against Westminster Councillor, Paul Dimoldenberg. The Panel had decided that no sanctions should be taken against Councillor Dimoldenberg in view of his long service and the fact he stood to gain nothing personally (in fact his actions assisted the Council). The implications of this finding would be further considered.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Standards Committee will be held on Tuesday, 11th October 2005

14. **Any Other Business**

Visits to Other Boroughs

An approach had been made to the Greater London Authority to arrange a visit to observe its Standards Committee. It had been provisionally agreed that the visit should take place on 26th January to be followed by a West London networking event to replace the one previously agreed for February. John Mann supported the proposal to widen the visit to the other West London boroughs.

A schedule of forthcoming Standards Committees taking place in neighbouring boroughs was tabled. John Mann expressed an interest in attending another Standards Committee and undertook to inform officers of which ones would be convenient to him.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

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