



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 20 September 2011 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Angela Ruotolo (Chair), John Mann (Independent Member, for Sola Afuape), and Councillors Colwill, Harrison (for Gladbaum) and Lorber (for Beck)

Apologies were received from: Councillors Beck, Gladbaum and Sola Afuape (Independent Member)

1. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

None declared.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meetings held on 22 March and 28 April 2011 be approved as accurate records of the meetings.

3. Exclusion of press and public

The committee gave consideration to whether the hearing should be conducted in the public or in private. The Monitoring Officer, Fiona Ledden, advised that having regard to the Standards Committee Regulations 2008 and the Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000 and the fact that the allegations concerned sensitive personal information relating to the complainant it was considered that the arguments for maintaining confidentiality outweighed the public interest in maintaining transparency.

RESOLVED:-

that the press and public be now excluded from the meeting as the information to be discussed relates to the following category of exempt information as specified in Paragraph 7c, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by The Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008) namely:

7C information presented to a standards committee or sub-committee of standards committee, set up to consider any matter under regulations 13 or 16 to 20 of the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008, or referred under section 58(1)(c) of the Local Government Act 2000.

4. To conduct a hearing into an allegation of misconduct under the Standards Code of Conduct

The committee met to conduct a hearing into an alleged breach of the Councillors' Code of Conduct by an elected member. Having confirmed that the meeting was quorate, the Chair opened the meeting and introduced those present. The Monitoring Officer (Fiona Ledden) outlined the procedure for the Hearing as set out in the Procedure Note included with the hearing papers previously circulated.

The Committee noted that the Investigator, Fiona Alderman, present at the meeting, was technically on maternity leave from the council and as such would be represented by Andy Potts (Solicitor). Each side then advised of the number of witnesses that they intended to call. The committee then noted the Findings of Fact by the Investigator and agreed by the member concerned and those disputed as set out in the Pre-Hearing Summary.

The Committee then heard evidence under oath from witnesses called by the Investigator and witnesses for the appellant following which questions were asked and answered. The Committee then heard evidence from the member under investigation following which members took the opportunity to ask questions.

Andy Potts then summarised the Investigating Officer's case referring to evidence presented both earlier in the evening and in written submissions. The member's representative then made final submissions referring also to evidence heard.

Parties to the appeal then left the meeting while the committee came to conclusions on the Findings of Fact and whether a breach of the Code of Conduct had occurred. They then returned to hear the committee's decision.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the member who was the subject of the hearing had not failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, the detailed reasons for which should be set out in a letter from the Monitoring Officer;
- (ii) that the Director of Legal and Procurement take the opportunity in her Annual Monitoring letter to remind all members of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct.

5. Sub-committee membership changes

None.

6. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on 6 December 2011.

7. Any Other Urgent Business

None.

The meeting closed at 11.35 pm

ANGELA RUOTOLO
Chair