



# LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

## MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE Wednesday, 20 January 2010 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: John Mann (Chair, independent), Councillors Bessong, Colwill and J Moher and also Sheila Darr (for Rochelle Gelman, independent)

Apologies were received from: Rochelle Gelman

### 1. **Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests**

None.

### 2. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 November 2009 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

### 3. **Matters arising**

#### *Review of Members' Expenses*

Members were advised that further clarification had been received on how the register of members' expenses was compiled. It was noted that all travel claims were approved in advance and arrangements were permissible under the terms of the scheme. Detailed information on individual claims will be provided in future reports.

### 4. **Planning Code of Practice Review**

The committee received the annual report from the Borough Solicitor which introduced the findings of the Planning Code of Practice Independent Annual Review for the period June 2008 to May 2009. The review found overall compliance with the code and members noted the Borough Solicitor's comments on the few relatively minor concerns which would be addressed either through training or tightening up of procedures and through Monitoring Officer's Advice Notes.

Members questioned whether the preliminary discussions between officers and applicants or their agents while projects were still at the developmental stage were as transparent as they should be. The Borough Solicitor stated that officers could only give applicants an indication of whether approval was likely to be recommended and any relevant consultation that had taken place would be referred to in the planning officer's report having regard to commercial sensitivities.

Planning policies were set out in reports and it was for members to apply them at committee taking into account views expressed. The members agreed to include an additional recommendation confirming this committee's expectation that every stage of the planning process should be as transparent as possible.

The Borough Solicitor also proposed that in the future, the review of the Planning Code be conducted every two years instead of annually given the current level of general compliance. This could be revisited in the future if felt necessary. This was agreed.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the findings of the Planning Code of Practice Independent Annual Review and the Borough Solicitor's comments be noted;
- (ii) that that this committee's expectation that every stage of planning process be conducted in a general spirit of openness and transparency, be recorded;
- (iii) that the changes to the Planning Code proposed by the Borough Solicitor be made under her delegated powers set out in the Constitution at Article 1 para 1.10(b);
- (iv) that in future, the review of the Planning Code be conducted every two years.

**5. Sub-Committee membership changes**

None.

**6. Any Other Urgent Business**

*Borough Solicitor*

The committee noted that this was the last meeting of the Standards Committee that would be attended by the Borough Solicitor, Terry Osborne, prior to her taking up a new appointment with the London Borough of Waltham Forest. Members thanked her for her support and advice over the years and wished her every success in her new role.

**7. Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on 24 March 2010.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

JOHN MANN  
Chair