



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE Tuesday, 6 December 2011 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Angela Ruotolo (Chair) and Councillors Colwill and Gladbaum

Apologies were received from: Councillor Beck and Sola Afuape

1. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

None declared.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 September 2011 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising (if any)

None.

4. The Localism Act 2011 and the provisions regarding members' conduct

The Borough Solicitor, Fiona Ledden, advised that the Localism Act 2011 received Royal Assent on 15 November 2011 and introduced new arrangements for members' conduct. The provisions were not yet in force and a date had not yet been set although it was suggested it may be April 2012. The report before members outlined the major changes to the standards and members' conduct arrangements although provisions of the Act were still unclear and also how it would translate into the Standards regime. The Borough Solicitor advised that a national code that could be used by other authorities was being drafted and would be circulated for comment. The aim was for a Standards regime that was both transparent and consistent. Fiona Ledden also advised that she had earlier in the day received correspondence from the interim Chief Executive of Standards for England advising that they would no longer be carrying out investigations after 31 January 2012, and outstanding cases would be referred back to the local authorities concerned. Cases currently before the First Tier Tribunal would remain there for consideration and decision.

In discussion members expressed a preference for similar arrangements to those currently in operation noting that the question of sanctions had to be resolved. It was noted that once the regulations were available they would be circulated and a special meeting the Standards Committee convened if necessary.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

5. Annual Report of the Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer's Annual Report for the period May 2010 to April 2011 provided an update on member conduct issues which included the review of the Register of Gifts and Hospitality and the Register of Member's Interests. The Borough Solicitor in introducing the report and referring to the Register of Gifts and Hospitality advised that a further two declarations should have been highlighted as having been submitted outside the time limit, making a total of ten. The committee felt that one member in particular would possibly benefit from a further reminder session on the requirements for making declarations. It was noted that all members had been advised of the importance of declaring interests and also subsequently reminded.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

6. Review of Members' Expenses - April 2010 to April 2011

The Mayor's Office and Member Development Manager introduced the report which outlined expenses claimed under the Members' Allowance Scheme over the period April 2010 to April 2011. Members were advised that that concerns expressed last year had been conveyed to the political group offices and were pleased to note that there had been a decrease in car usage and an increase in train and tube travel and even cross-party car share.

RESOLVED

that the report be noted.

7. Sub-Committee membership changes (if any)

None.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on 13 March 2012. A special meeting may be convened in February 2012 should the draft Standards regulations become available. It was also noted that arrangements were being made for the annual Standards Network Event to take place in January 2012.

9. **Any Other Urgent Business**

Season's Greetings

The Chair expressed her good wishes to all for the Season and the New Year.

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm

ANGELA RUOTOLO
Chair