

**MINUTES of the meeting of Standards Committee held at
The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road,
Hereford on Friday, 17th June, 2005 at 2.00 p.m.**

Present: Robert Rogers (Independent Member) (Chairman)
Councillors: John Edwards and John Stone
Town and Parish Council Representative: Richard Gething
Independent Member: David Stevens

In attendance: Councillor W.J.S. Thomas

1. WELCOME TO COUNCILLOR JOHN STONE

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman extended a warm welcome to Councillor John Stone to his first meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr John Hardwick.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2005 be approved as a correct record, subject to some minor amendments, and signed by the Chairman.

5. APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATIONS RECEIVED FROM TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILLORS

The Committee considered the report of the County Secretary and Solicitor on applications for dispensations from Bartestree with Lugwardine Group Parish Council and from Mathon Parish Council. Bartestree with Lugwardine had requested a dispensation for Councillor N. Alexander instead of former Councillor T. Rowberry as a Trustee of Bartestree Village Hall, a registered charity. Mathon had submitted a request for Councillors S Harte, S Thetford, R Thomas and N Walker to be granted a dispensation as Trustees on Mathon Village Hall Management Committee, a registered charity. Both applications fulfilled the criteria for a dispensation to be granted.

RESOLVED (unanimously) That the above Councillors from Bartestree with Lugwardine Group Parish Council and from Dinedor Parish Council be granted dispensations as requested.

6. PROTOCOL ON THE USE OF COUNCIL RESOURCES BY MEMBERS

The Committee gave further consideration to the Draft Protocol on the use of Council resources by Members. The Chairman said that it had been made as user friendly as possible but at the same time was aimed at offering sound guidance for Members. Reference to ICT issues had been deleted because this area was already covered by other Council guidance. Some minor amendments were made.

RESOLVED: (unanimously) that the Draft Protocol be subject to any further amendment from Members of the Committee, following which the views of Councillor Mrs J French, Cabinet Member (Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources) and thereafter all Members be sought, before submission to Council.

7. REVIEW OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCILLORS

The Committee considered the report of the County Secretary and Solicitor about a possible review of the roles and responsibilities of Members. It was noted that the current Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) would be gathering evidence that the roles and responsibilities of Officers and Members for taking decisions were clear and that the decision making process was transparent and resulted in relevant actions. The Committee felt that this was an area that could be reviewed in the future if the Council introduced any changes but did not feel that it was a matter for the Committee to initiate.

The County Secretary and Solicitor said that it was likely that the Committee would be examined as part of the CPA and the Chairman commented that it was essential that he met the assessors.

RESOLVED: (unanimously) that the report be noted and that the matter be considered further after the views of the Group Leaders and the Corporate Review Working Group were known.

8. ANNUAL REPORT 2004/05

Consideration was given to the contents of the Annual Report of the Committee for 2004/2005

RESOLVED: (unanimously) that subject to some minor amendments the Annual Report 2004/2005 be approved for publication.

RESOLVED: (unanimously) that under section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (other than the Authority)

9. DETERMINATIONS BY THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND 2004

The Committee considered a report on the current investigations by the Standards Board for England (SBE) in respect of complaints of alleged misconduct against certain councillors. It was noted that the number of cases outstanding had reduced significantly and that the SBE was making good progress in dealing with the backlog.

The County Secretary and Solicitor said that she would provide the Committee with the details of case reference No. 11076.05 which the SBE had decided did not require investigation.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the report be noted.

10. REFERRALS FROM THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND

The County Secretary and Solicitor said that the Standards Board for England had referred two complaints against local councillors to the Council for investigation. The investigating officers were in the process of finalising their review of the complaints before preparing their reports for consideration by the Committee. Because of the timescales involved, the Committee agreed that a special meeting should be held to consider the findings, followed by a hearing if it was considered to be necessary.

RESOLVED: (unanimously) that a special meeting of the Committee be held on Friday 8th July and if necessary a hearing on 26th July to consider these cases.

The meeting ended at 3.23 p.m.

CHAIRMAN