

## **REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

### **Meetings held on 17 June and 8 July 2005**

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#### **Membership:**

Robert Rogers (Independent Member) (Chairman); Councillor John Edwards, Councillor John Stone; Richard Gething (Town and Parish Council Representative); John Hardwick (Town and Parish Council Representative); David Stevens (Independent Member),

#### **COUNCILLOR PETER HARLING**

1. We paid tribute to Councillor Peter Harling for his outstanding contribution to public service and in particular to the Standards Committee; and we welcomed Councillor John Stone to the Committee following his appointment as Vice Chairman of the Council.

#### **APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATIONS RECEIVED FROM TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILLORS**

2. We have granted a dispensation in respect of Bartestree Village Hall Committee to a new member of Bartestree with Lugwardine Group Parish Council who has replaced a former councillor. We have also granted dispensations to four Mathon Parish councillors who are trustees of Mathon Village Hall Management Committee.

#### **PROTOCOL ON THE USE OF COUNCIL RESOURCES BY MEMBERS**

3. We have given further consideration to the draft protocol on the use of Council resources by Members. It is now much shorter (with detailed ICT provisions removed) and, we hope, helpful. All Members have been consulted on this final draft.

**RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL: That the revised protocol set out in Appendix 1 to this report be adopted.**

#### **ANNUAL REPORT 2004/05**

4. We have prepared our second Annual Report, which covers the Committee's role, its membership, work programme and current issues. The report reflects another very busy year for the Committee. We have sought to ensure that Herefordshire demonstrates best practice and is at the forefront of national developments. The regulation of standards is now part of public life, and plays an important part in enhancing and maintaining public confidence; but the credibility of the system in local government, as elsewhere, depends upon it being open, fair and proportionate. These principles are at the heart of our approach. We are circulating the report to Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority, the Herefordshire Association of Local Councils, Town and Parish Councils in the County, the Standards Board for England and the local media. The report is attached to this report (Appendix 2) and is also available on the Council's website.

## **DETERMINATIONS BY THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND**

5. We have considered progress reports on current investigations by the Standards Board for England in respect of complaints of alleged misconduct against certain councillors. We noted that the number of cases outstanding had reduced significantly and that the SBE is making good progress in dealing with the backlog.

## **REFERRALS FROM THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND**

6. The Standards Board for England has referred two complaints against local parish and town councillors to the Council for investigation under the provisions of the Local Authority's (Code of Conduct)(Local Determinations) Regulations 2003 (as amended). Although we have already held local hearings of complaints, these two cases are the first to be investigated locally. We have met to consider the findings of the investigating officers (from the County Secretary and Solicitor's Department), and will hear the cases on 26 July 2005.

**ROBERT ROGERS  
CHAIRMAN  
STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

- Agenda papers of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 17 June and 8 July 2005