

**BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

**At a Meeting of the**

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**Held on Monday, 15 March 2010 at 9.30 am in  
Dereham Room, Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham**

**PRESENT**

Mr M.D. Eveling JP	Mr B.D Rayner
Mrs J. Jenkins (Chairman)	Mr G. Ridgway
Mrs S.M. Matthews	Mr F.J. Sharpe
Mrs M. Oechsle JP	Mr M. Whittley

**In Attendance**

Susan Allen	- Standards Officer
Helen McAleer	- Senior Committee Officer
Stephen McGrath	- Member Services Manager

**Action By**

**14/09 MINUTES**

The Chairman wished to clarify that the Standards for England report did not refer specifically to Breckland, as was inferred in the second and fifth paragraphs of page 2 of the Minutes, but was concerned about Districts with large numbers of parishes in general.

Subject to this clarification, the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**15/09 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D Williams.

**16/09 URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

**17/09 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

No declarations were made.

**18/09 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING**

None present.

**19/09 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES**

The usual invitation had been received for members of the Committee to attend the Annual Assembly. The cost per member was considered to be high, but nevertheless the conference was of great value and provided an excellent opportunity for networking.

The Chairman suggested that preference should be given to any

members who had not previously attended and said that as her term as Chairman was reaching a conclusion, it would be wrong for her to go.

**RESOLVED** that Mrs Matthews and Mr Rayner be nominated to attend the Annual Assembly, with Mrs Oechsle and Mr Whittle being noted as potential reserves.

**20/09 NEW CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS – ITEM FOR INFORMATION**

The Standards Consultant noted this further delay to the publication of the new Code and asked members for their thoughts on future training.

It was agreed that this could not be put off indefinitely and that it was important to regularly refresh the memories of Members on the requirements of the Code.

As the District Council elections would be held in May 2011, there was some concern that training could be arranged, but Members might not attend as there would be some who were not planning to stand for election again, and others who thought they might not be re-elected. It was therefore suggested that the training could be held at the end of a full Council meeting to encourage attendance.

The Chairman felt that it was important to engage Members in training, especially for those serving on Committees and as Chairmen. The Member Services Manager explained that there was a training programme in place for Members.

A Member noted that lack of training might count against a Member and the Standards Consultant agreed that this was mentioned in Standards for England reports and was a factor to be considered in any investigations of alleged breaches.

**21/09 STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND : BULLETIN 47**

The Chairman received an electronic copy of the Bulletin and she enquired if other members did also. She explained that it was a useful format as there were many links to other sites and articles of interest. There was also a private forum for Standards Committee Members, which was useful as a discussion board.

The Standards Officer explained how members could subscribe to bulletins on the Standards for England website and she agreed to arrange passwords for those members not currently able to access the bulletin.

From the Forum, the Chairman had noted that there had been no progress in relation to vexatious complaints. The Standards Consultant said that this was becoming a real problem in Norfolk, with some people taking up far too much time on Standards. He felt that the current system was not set up to deal adequately with this problem. Some complaints might benefit from early investigation and mediation, saving both time and energy.

**Action By**

**Sue Allen**

Other items in the Bulletin were noted and a member asked how the authority's risk level was assessed (Our Risk Based Approach – article on page 9 of the agenda). The Standards Consultant advised that this was assessed from the monitoring information sent in by the Council and on the number of complaints about the Council, made direct to Standards for England.

**22/09 NEXT MEETING**

At the conclusion of the meeting the Committee had been invited to meet the Executive Members for a general discussion on the Committee's role.

A schedule of committee meetings for coordination of visits by Committee members would be put to the next meeting.

As it was the aim of the Committee to raise their profile and to be known to all the Councillors it was suggested that they should be provided with magnetic name badges, like those recently distributed to elected members. The Member Services Manager agreed to arrange this.

The arrangements for the next meeting on 27 April 2010 were noted.

**Action By**

**Sue Allen**

**Stephen  
McGrath**

The meeting closed at 10.15 am

CHAIRMAN