

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**Held on Tuesday, 17 May 2011 at 2.15 pm in
Anglia Room, Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr M.D. Eveling JP
Mr F.J. Sharpe

Mr D.R. Williams JP

In Attendance

Susan Allen
John Chinnery
Helen McAleer
Vicky Thomson

- Standards Officer
- Solicitor & Standards Consultant
- Senior Committee Officer
- Assistant Director - Democratic Services

Action By

31/11 CHAIRMAN (AGENDA ITEM 1)

RESOLVED that Mr Michael Eveling be elected Chairman for the ensuing year.

32/11 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

33/11 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 3)

Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs S Matthews, Mr B Rayner and Mr G Ridgway.

34/11 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

None.

35/11 DECLARATION OF INTEREST (AGENDA ITEM 5)

None.

36/11 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 6)

None.

37/11 TO CONSIDER ANY APPLICATIONS RECEIVED FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON THIS COMMITTEE (AGENDA ITEM 7)

Members reviewed the applications received and chose five to be invited for interview.

The Solicitor suggested that a Sub-Committee should be appointed to carry out the interviews. It was agreed that the Sub-Committee should comprise one Independent Member, one District Councillor and one

Action By

Parish Member. Mr Eveling, Mr Williams and Mr Rayner were nominated, with Mr Sharpe acting as substitute. A date would be arranged and notified to Sub-Committee Members.

38/11 DISPENSATIONS GRANTED TO MAY 2011 (AGENDA ITEM 8)

A list of the Dispensations made by the Committee had been circulated to Members.

It was **AGREED** to authorise the Monitoring Officer to grant applications received for dispensations from parish councillors from the Parish Councils where dispensations have previously been granted, for the same purposes, to May 2015. (*List of previous dispensations attached for information.*)

39/11 SCHEDULE OF MEETING DATES (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The Standards Officer advised Members that it had been very helpful to have set dates for potential Sub-Committee meetings and asked if the practice could continue. This was agreed.

She would circulate a table of proposed dates (usually the first Tuesday of the month) and Members were asked to note their availability and return the completed table to her. She would notify Members each month if the date was not required.

40/11 LOCALISM BILL (AGENDA ITEM 10)

The Solicitor advised that very little information had been received and there was talk of amendments but it was not known to which parts of the Bill.

With regard to Parish Councils, one comment had been noted. It referred to the Specified Person to maintain the Register and said that the responsibility might remain with Monitoring Officers of District Councils.

41/11 TO CONSIDER WHAT THE LEADER SHOULD BE ASKED ON THE FUTURE OF THE STANDARDS REGIME (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The Chairman thought that it would be useful if the Leader and Executive were advised of the views of the Monitoring Officers and also take strong note of the Committee's views from the last meeting with regard to the importance of the role of Independent Members and support for a Voluntary Code, either just for Breckland or County wide.

Mr Williams said that the Leader had been in favour of Independent Members in an informal discussion with him, prior to the elections. He personally felt that the Committee should remain, especially now that the Council had shared Management with South Holland District Council.

Mr Sharpe was concerned that there would be long term problems if the Code was voluntary as it might apply to some areas of the District and not to others.

It was agreed that more details were needed from the Localism Bill, but the Chairman thought it was still important to put the Committee's views to the Leader.

Action By

The Solicitor noted that there had been talk of a draft report at the Monitoring Officers' meeting, but it had not been prepared yet by Norfolk County Council. Once it was available he would bring it to a future meeting.

The Chairman asked that it be circulated to Members in advance of the meeting if possible.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Leader be provided with feedback from the Monitoring Officers' meeting and also be asked:

1. if he and the Executive would be in favour, in principle, of a voluntary Code of Conduct for Breckland when the existing national Code is withdrawn;
2. to note that the Committee strongly believes that Independent Members can have a beneficial impact and role to play, particularly from the perspective of the public, and whether it is contemplated that they will be retained in a future Standards Committee; and
3. whether there was any support for a County wide voluntary Code of Conduct and/or joint Standards Committee.

John
Chinnery

42/11 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS (AGENDA ITEM 12)

The following item was suggested for a future agenda:

- Training and Standards for new Members.

43/11 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 13)

The arrangements for the next meeting on 5 July 2011 were noted.

44/11 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (AGENDA ITEM 14)

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

45/11 SCHEDULE OF OUTSTANDING COMPLAINTS AND INVESTIGATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 15)

Information was tabled on the outstanding complaints and investigations. The Solicitor informed Members that there was a lot of work, all at different stages of the process.

It was noted that more than one Sub-Committee meeting might be required in June to deal with the workload.

The meeting closed at 2.42 pm

CHAIRMAN