
REPORT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD ON 17 DECEMBER 2007

Chairman: * The Right Revd Peter Broadbent

Councillors: * B E Gate * Joyce Nickolay
 * Mrs Kinnear * Phillip O'Dell
 * Jean Lammiman

Independent Persons: * Ms Sheila Darr * Mr Mohammad Rizvi
 * Dr J Kirkland

* Denotes Member present

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL

PART II - MINUTES

71. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

72. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.

73. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That all items be considered with the press and public present.

74. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman:**

RESOLVED: To appoint Dr John Kirkland as Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2007/08.

75. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2007 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

76. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put at the meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 19.

77. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received at the meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 16.

78. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at the meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 17.

79. **Protocol for Councillors' Website:**

An officer presented a report of the Director of Business Transformation and Customer Services, which set out proposals for a protocol for Councillors writing information and/or including material on the Internet such as web logs or blogs. The Committee was requested to approve the protocol and recommend that Council formally adopt the Protocol for inclusion in the Council's Constitution.

The officer explained that the protocol was based on a series of legislation and advised that a protocol was necessary. One Member expressed the view that Members

needed to be properly supported in updating Internet pages. This included support with technical elements.

The Chairman noted that blogs were inherently controversial and suggested the option of a link to the Councillor blog outside the main Harrow Council website. An independent member expressed concern about Part 4D and 4E of the protocol, which he felt could lead to complaints.

In response to questions, the officer confirmed that:

- information regarding Councillors was available on the Harrow Council Website but it was not in an easily accessible format;
- Harrow was moving towards 'lively' web pages and then blogs;
- work would be within the existing Web budget.

An independent member expressed the view that a complete 'commitment sheet' was necessary, to ensure the project was properly funded. The Chairman noted that it was appropriate for the issue of funding to be referred to the relevant Portfolio Holder. Some Members expressed concern over the checking of the Web pages and expressed further concerns about the proposals.

The Director of Legal and Governance Services questioned whether the protocol would be acceptable to Members of the Committee for just the 'lively' web pages. The Chairman expressed the view that the protocol should be re-considered once the web pages were active. The Chairman noted that it would be useful for Members of the Committee to look at the London Borough of Lambeth's Website. One Member expressed the view that the proposed protocol could be built into Members' Code of Conduct training.

RESOLVED: That, in light of the comments made in the preamble above, the protocol not be approved, but be referred to the Director of Business Transformation and Customer Services and the Member Development Panel for further consideration, and that consideration should include whether a better way forward is to have links to external sites for political matters, the practice and experience at Lambeth, funding and training for Councillors.

80. **Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 - Ethical Standards:**

The Director of Legal and Governance Services presented a report, which set out the measures which the Committee needed to consider resulting from the Local Government and Public Health Involvement in Health Act 2007.

The Director explained that the Standards Board for England intended to scale down into a more strategic body. The Board would eventually only deal with the most serious cases and, as a result, the majority of cases would be dealt with by Harrow's Standards Committee.

The Director stated that the Committee would exercise more functions and therefore three Sub-Committees should be established. He explained that the Committee was being asked to establish the Sub-Committees initially but further details could be dealt with at a later date.

Members questioned the arrangements for membership including issues regarding Reserve Members. One Member was of the view that the rules on political proportionality did not apply for the Standards Committee.

Following further discussion it was

RESOLVED: That (1) three sub-committees be established to deal with:

- Filtering of written allegations that a Member or Co-opted member might have failed to comply with the Code of Conduct;
- Requests for review of a decision not to refer a complaint for investigation;
- Determination of complaints that have been investigated.

(2) the Membership of the Sub-Committees be referred to Members and the Director of Legal and Governance Services for further consideration.

81. **Feedback on Standards Board Local Filter Pilot Project:**
The Director of Legal and Governance Services introduced a report, which set out the findings of the Standards Board for England on the Local Filter Pilot Project. He thanked Members who had participated in the Project.

Following a short discussion, it was

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.32 pm, closed at 8.29 pm).

(Signed) THE RIGHT REVD PETER BROADBENT
Chairman