

**Minutes of a meeting of the Mid Sussex District Council
Standards Committee held on Tuesday 2nd October 2007
From 7.00pm to 8.30pm**

Present:- Sir Roger Sands (Chairman)
Cllr Christopher Snowling (Vice-Chair)*

Jenny Forbes
Cllr Gina Field
Cllr Sue Hatton

Cllr Jacqui Landriani*
Cllr Heather Ross
Patrick Shanahan*

Trevor Swainson
Pat Webster
Ian Church

* Absent

Also Present as Appointed Substitutes: Councillors Pru Moore and Margaret Baker.
Also Present: Councillor Anne Jones

1. SUBSTITUTES

The Committee noted that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4 – Substitutes at Meetings of Committees etc. – Councillor Pru Moore had replaced Councillor Jacqui Landriani and Councillor Margaret Baker had replaced Councillor Christopher Snowling for the duration of the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Jacqui Landriani and Christopher Snowling.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Committee held on the 19th July 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. NEW MEMBERSHIP AND EXPLANATION OF THE NEW ROLE FOR THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Chairman welcomed the new Members of the Committee, Jenny Forbes and Ian Church.

The Monitoring Officer briefly outlined the new role of the Standards Committee. The Standards Committee will consider how to respond to complaints around Member Conduct; this could be to investigate the complaint and hold a hearing, to take no action because the complaint is clearly without merit, or, in the case of a very serious complaint, to refer the case for investigation by the Standards Board for England.

6. STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND DVD PRESENTATION

The Members of the Committee watched a training video on the new Code of Conduct. Members then asked the Monitoring Officer a series of questions arising from this, to which the Monitoring Officer responded.

In response to Members' questions, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that, under the new Code of Conduct, an interest would only be considered to be Prejudicial if the Member's interest in the matter were likely to be perceived to be greater than that of any other resident in their ward and not, as previously, in the whole District. This makes it easier for Ward Members to speak at meetings on issues affecting their constituents.

Members also sought clarification on the definition of a Regulatory Interest. The Monitoring Officer stated that, for example, Members of a Parish Council would not have to declare a Prejudicial Interest at a District Council Planning Committee just because a proposed development fell within their Parish area. However, if the Parish Council owned the land the development would be built on, this would constitute a Regulatory Interest and the Members ought to declare a Prejudicial Interest in the application.

7. REVIEW OF FURTHER TRAINING NEEDS AND OPTIONS

The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that further training on the future role of the Committee would be provided after the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health bill was passed later this month. This was because it was still possible that the details of the Bill could be amended before it becomes law.

Members felt that the Standards Board DVD had been very informative and should be shared with all Parish Councils in the District.

8. VERBAL REPORT ON THE STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE HEARING HELD ON 28TH SEPTEMBER 2007

Sir Roger gave a verbal report on the Standards Sub-Committee hearing held on 28th September. He summarized the events of the hearing and informed the Committee that the decision of the Sub-Committee had been that Mr Williams had not acted improperly, contrary to the opinion expressed in the Investigating Officer's report. He added that it was unfortunate that the proceedings had been subject to such long delays and that this should not be allowed to occur again in future.

Councillor Ross commented that the issues under discussion at the hearing were the same as had been covered in today's training video. She felt that the training that Members had received today would help them to reach decisions at future hearings.

Chairman