

At a meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on FRIDAY, 25TH NOVEMBER, 2011 at 1.00 p.m.

Present:-

Mr. G.N. Cook in the Chair

Councillors Shattock, Tate and Wakefield together with Mr. J.P. Paterson and Councillors Hepple and Wilkinson (Hetton Town Council).

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Charlton and Forbes together with Mr. C. Stewart.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee

The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 30th September, 2011 (copy circulated) were submitted.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

Localism Act 2011 – ACSes Draft Model Code of Conduct for Members

The Executive Director of Commercial and Corporate Services submitted a report (copy circulated) providing an update on the provisions of the Localism Bill which had received Royal assent on 15th November, 2011 and advising of a draft of a model code of conduct developed by the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (ACSes).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Council's Monitoring Officer, Ms. Elaine Waugh briefed the Committee on the report advising that the Act contains a requirement for Authorities to have code of conduct, which must be in accordance with the Nolan Principles and must include a requirement for Members to register and disclose pecuniary and non pecuniary

interests. Members had previously expressed support for the principle of the Tyne & Wear Authorities adopting the same code of conduct. In the meantime, ACSeS had developed a draft of a model code and Members were invited to consider the draft and express their views on it.

Ms Waugh stated that a concerted effort had been made to make the code simpler to understand and therefore easier to follow.

Members welcomed to the attempt to make the code simpler.

The Chairman referred to paragraph 4 of the draft code of conduct which stated that there would not be any requirement to declare or register any gifts and hospitality. He stated that he felt it was a good discipline to declare gifts and hospitality and it was his opinion that this requirement should be retained. Others Members of the Committee concurred with the Chairman's view.

In response to Members' enquiries, Ms Waugh advised that the intention was that the Standards Board was to be abolished by 31st March, 2012 and prior to this it would cease carrying out investigations into complaints at the end of January 2012. Standards for England would notify the Council with regards to the transitional arrangements.

Full discussion having taken place it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be noted together with the Committee's view that the requirement to declare or register any gifts and hospitality should be retained in any new Code of Conduct.

Proud of Sunderland Lamppost Banners Project

The Director of Communications and Corporate Affairs submitted a report (copy circulated) providing a briefing to Members with regards to the publicity banners located at various points in the City, as requested at the Committee's last meeting.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Council's Monitoring Officer, Ms. Elaine Waugh briefed the Committee on the report highlighting that the initial installation of the lamppost banners took place in March 2008, with a maintenance contract running until December 2011 and that this was therefore due to expire. A decision on potential future usage of banners in key areas across the City for specific reasons would be made based on value for money and return on investment.

Members enquired how value for money and return on investment would be assessed and whether the public would be consulted on the matter. They also commented that it was important to remove the banners when they became shabby otherwise they were doing the Council a disservice.

3. RESOLVED that the report be noted and that responses to the questions posed as detailed above be sought on the Committee's behalf and circulated to Members for their information.

The Chairman having thanked Members for their attendance, closed the meeting.

(Signed) G.N. COOK,
Chairman.