

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE STANDARDS BOARD

Date: 8 April 2009

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30 pm

Present: Graham Blagden (Chairman)

East Northamptonshire Councillors: Glenvil Greenwood- Smith Barbara Jenney

Town and Parish Councillors: Prudence Goss Sue North
Gwen Radcliffe

Independent Members: Hilary Daniels Canon Roger Knight
Lance Quantrill

Also attended: Don Campbell (Observer – see minute 436)

PART A ITEMS

436. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Don Campbell (Oundle Town Council) who attended the meeting as an observer and would be replacing Cllr Gwen Radcliffe as a Town Council representative on the Standards Board at the next meeting.

437. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2009 were approved and signed by the Chairman, subject to replacing the word “Mrs” in minute 341 with “Ms”.

438. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Brian Northall and John Denning sent apologies.

439. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

440. ACTIVITY REPORT OF MONITORING OFFICER

The Board received a report on the ethical matters dealt with by the Monitoring Officer since the last meeting and noted the volume and nature of activity over the period. It was reported that outstanding actions arising from investigations into complaints against two Raunds Town Councillors were nearly complete. The matters identified through the investigations had been discussed in detail with the Mayor and Town Clerk and advice and support had been offered on their governance and procedures generally. The Board noted that all Town and Parish Councils needed to put in place formal arrangements for dealing with disciplinary matters.

Members noted future developments arising from new legislation and reaffirmed their wish to continue with the present arrangements for handling local complaints and not to enter into joint arrangements with other Authorities. Members were however concerned that the vacant District Councillor seat on the Standards Board had not been filled following Cllr Thorpe's resignation from the Council last year and called for the required appointment to be made at the Annual Council meeting.

It was noted that places had been booked for three members of the Board and the Monitoring Officer for the 2009 Standards Board for England Assembly in October. Mr Lance Quantrill, Ms Hilary Daniels, and Cllrs Barbara Jenney and Glenvil Greenwood-Smith put their names forward and it was agreed decisions on attendance would be made nearer the time.

The Board noted that version 3 of the Parish Council Toolkit would be launched at the end of April and a CD or printed copy would be supplied to all Town and Parish Councils in the District.

It was confirmed that nominations were being sought from Parish Councils for a Parish Council representative to replace Cllr John Denning whose term of office would finish in October 2009.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and noted.

441. LOCAL CODE OF GOVERNANCE

Members considered a draft Local Code of Governance, which had been prepared by the Monitoring Officer to comply with the CIPFA/Solace Good Governance Framework. The local code was designed to:-

- provide a simple quick reference point for customers and regulators interested in our governance arrangements;
- serve as a management tool for reviewing and monitoring existing corporate governance arrangements;
- provide evidence of our governance arrangements for our "Use of Resources" assessment, and Annual Governance Statement, and.
- help develop plans for improving arrangements for corporate governance.

The Board suggested minor changes to the text in respect of the links to key budget and risk management documentation and that the annual Statement of Accounts be added to the list of links.

RESOLVED:

That, with the amendments noted, the draft Local Code of Governance be approved.

442. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2008/09

The Board commented in detail on the draft of the statutory Annual Governance Statement which represented “work in progress”, noting that the Audit Manager would have further changes to make as her evidence checking was not yet complete. The Monitoring Officer noted all the comments made by Members, which included:-

- a suggestion that a glossary of terms be added if the document was to be available to the general public
- adding many more examples to evidence how the Council had delivered each of the 6 principles set out in the table , and
- specific textual changes to pages 21 and 22.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Annual Governance Statement be approved, subject to the comments made at the meeting.

443. RECORDS OF APPRECIATION

The Chairman informed the Board that it was Cllr Gwen Radcliffe’s last meeting as a Town Council representative on the Standards Board; he thanked her for her invaluable contribution since the Board’s inception and throughout the past eight years and presented her with a bouquet of flowers on behalf of the Board.

The Board also noted that it was the last Board meeting that would be attended by Mrs Barbara Ding in her role as Monitoring Officer. The Chairman thanked her for her work in setting up and leading the Board in response to the new legislative requirements in 2000 and for her continued support and guidance to the Board, and to the Council and the Town and Parish Councils in East Northamptonshire since then. He presented her with a bouquet of flowers in appreciation of her service.

Chairman