

EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE STANDARDS BOARD

Date: 8 July 2009

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30 pm

Present: Graham Blagden (Chairman)

East Northamptonshire Councillors: Glenvil Greenwood- Smith Brian Northall

Barbara Jenney Roger Powell

Town and Parish Councillors: Don Campbell Prudence Goss

Independent Members: Hilary Daniels Lance Quantrill

PART A ITEMS

69. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Don Campbell (Oundle Town Council), Sharn Matthews (Monitoring Officer) and Councillor Roger Powell (East Northamptonshire Council) to their first meeting of the Board. The Chairman informed the Board of the resignation of Canon Roger Knight (Independent member), and circulated Canon Knight's letter of resignation and the Chairman's response to members of the Board.

70. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2009 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

71. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors John Denning and Sue North sent apologies.

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

73. 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. The Board noted that the first annual return had been submitted to the Standards Board for England (SBE) in which the good practice carried out by the Council was highlighted and certain

issues identified for the SBE to consider, such as promoting awareness of the Code of Conduct among political parties for inclusion in their recruitment processes.

The Monitoring Officer drew the Board's attention to a summary of the results of the SBE project to identify the impact of the standards framework. The Board noted that the preliminary results from year one indicated that, in most of the councils studied, the ethical framework and standards had become established and accepted as part of corporate life, and the majority of respondents were positive about the move towards local regulation. It was also noted that the SBE would be known as "Standards for England" from 1 July.

It was noted that since the last meeting, 16 enquiries had been recorded from Parish and Town Council Clerks and Councillors, District Councillors and the general public, and a refresher session on the Code of Conduct had been held at Collyweston Parish Council. The Monitoring Officer also highlighted the changes in the criteria for granting dispensations and the Board noted the increased flexibility these changes brought.

It was confirmed that three nominations had been received from Parish Councils for a Parish Council representative to replace Councillor John Denning whose term of office would finish in October 2009 and voting would take place shortly. The recruitment of an Independent member was also discussed and the Board emphasised the importance of recruiting as soon as possible. It was established that the Chairman, the Monitoring Officer and Councillor Glenvil Greenwood-Smith (as a District Council representative) would sit on the interview panel.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and noted.

74. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN (LGO) REVIEW 2008/09

The Board reviewed the Local Government Ombudsman's investigations into complaints against the Council for the financial year 2008/09 and compared the position with that of the previous year. It was noted that during 2008/09 the LGO had received four complaints (compared with twelve the previous year) and had decided four complaints about the Council, compared with twelve in 2007/08. Three of those decided concerned planning applications and in each case the LGO found no or insufficient evidence of maladministration or service failure. The fourth complaint was about an environmental health matter and the LGO used his discretion not to investigate. In all the cases received and decided, there had not been any need to contact the Council to make enquiries.

The Board believed the LGO's Annual Review was encouraging and it suggested that the Council's internal procedures and controls (especially the corporate complaints procedure) were contributing to fewer complaints being submitted to the LGO.

RESOLVED:

That the LGO's Annual Review for 2008/09 be welcomed.

Chairman