



# Epping Forest District Council

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, 11th April, 2006**

**Place:** Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

**Room:** Committee Room 1

**Time:** 7.30 pm

**Democratic Services Officer** Graham Lunnun (Direct Line 01992 564244)  
Email: glunnun@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

**Members:**

Dr D Hawes (Chairman), Ms M Marshall, G Weltch, Councillors Mrs D Borton and Mrs P Smith

**Parish/Town Council Representative(s):**

Councillors J Salter, K Percy (Deputy)

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**2. MINUTES (Pages 7 - 10)**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2006 (attached).

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

**4. ALLEGATIONS ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF DISTRICT AND PARISH/TOWN COUNCILLORS - CURRENT POSITION (Pages 11 - 12)**

(Monitoring Officer) To note the attached schedule.

**5. ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF STANDARDS COMMITTEES**

**Recommendation:**

**To consider the appointment of a representative(s) to attend this year's Annual Assembly.**

(Monitoring Officer) Details have been received of the fifth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees being held at the ICC, Birmingham on 16 and 17 October 2006.

Phil Woolas MP, Minister for Local Government, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will deliver his vision for the future of the ethical framework, including an update on the implementation of the revised Code of Conduct and proposals for a more locally focused system.

This year's conference will concentrate on identifying and then closing the gaps between the resources, knowledge and experience needed for effective regulation of ethical standards at a local level.

The conference fee is £415 plus VAT per delegate and includes conference notes and refreshments (Monday lunch and dinner, and Tuesday lunch). Hotels in the locality range from £85 to £140 per night, some of which include breakfast).

## **6. EXEMPT INFORMATION**

### **Recommendation:**

#### **To note changes made to the categories of exempt information.**

(Monitoring Officer) On 1 March 2006, changes were made to legislation which affect hearings of Standards Committees. The changes are contained in the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 and the Relevant Authorities (Standards Committee) (Amendment) Regulations 2006.

The changes relate to the provisions regarding the access to meetings of local authorities and the availability of documents relating to such meetings. Principal councils can exclude the press and public from a meeting whenever it is likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information. The Order replaces the categories of exempt information with simpler and clearer descriptions.

The main alteration is that the new regulations no longer contain specific provision relating to the personal circumstances of any person. This provision is covered in new paragraphs 1 and 2 which refer to information relating to any individual and information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

The categories of exempt information specifically relating to Standards Committee hearings are largely unaffected, although they are re-numbered as follows:

- 7A – Information which is subject to any obligation of confidentiality;
- 7B - Information which relates in any way to matters concerning national security;
- 7C - The deliberations of a Standards Committee or a sub-committee of a Standards Committee in reaching any finding on a matter.

The Standards Committee remains of the view that hearings should generally be held in public.

## **7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

(Monitoring Officer) The calendar for 2006/07 provides for meetings of the Committee on 18 July 2006, 17 October 2006, 27 February 2007 and 25 April 2007.

Additional meetings can be arranged as and when required by the Committee.

## **8. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**Exclusion:** To consider whether, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press should be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on grounds that they will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) or are confidential under Section 100(A)(2):

Agenda Item No	Subject	Exempt Information Paragraph Number
9	Adjudication Committee	Sub- 1 and 2

The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, which came into effect on 1 March 2006, requires the Council to consider whether maintaining the exemption listed above outweighs the potential public interest in disclosing the information. Any member who considers that this test should be applied to any currently exempted matter on this agenda should contact the proper officer at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.

**Confidential Items Commencement:** Paragraph 9 of the Council Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution require:

- (1) All business of the Council requiring to be transacted in the presence of the press and public to be completed by 10.00 p.m. at the latest.
- (2) At the time appointed under (1) above, the Chairman shall permit the completion of debate on any item still under consideration, and at his or her discretion, any other remaining business whereupon the Council shall proceed to exclude the public and press.
- (3) Any public business remaining to be dealt with shall be deferred until after the completion of the private part of the meeting, including items submitted for report rather than decision.

**Background Papers:** Paragraph 8 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules of the Constitution define background papers as being documents relating to the subject matter of the report which in the Proper Officer's opinion:

- (a) disclose any facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based; and
- (b) have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report and does not include published works or those which disclose exempt or confidential information (as defined in Rule 10) and in respect of executive reports, the advice of any political advisor.

Inspection of background papers may be arranged by contacting the officer responsible for the item.

## 9. ADJUDICATION SUB-COMMITTEES (Pages 13 - 14)

To consider a restricted report.