

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Standards Committee

Date: 25 April 2007

Place: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Time: 7.30 - 7.50 pm

Members Present: Dr D Hawes (Independent Member) (Chairman), Ms M Marshall (Independent Member), G Weltch (Independent Member), Mrs D Borton (Epping Forest Council Appointee), Mrs P Smith (Epping Forest Council Appointee), Councillor J Salter (Parish or Town Council Representative) and Councillor B Surtees (Parish or Town Council Deputy)

Other Councillors:

Apologies:

Officers Present: C O'Boyle (Monitoring Officer), I Willett (Deputy Monitoring Officer) and G Lunnun (Allegations Determination Manager)

36. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 February 2007 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

37. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

(a) Planning Protocol - Revision (Minute 33)

The Chairman reported that the Council had adopted the revised Planning Protocol as recommended by the Committee at its last meeting.

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

39. REVISED CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

The Monitoring Officer reported that the Government had issued a revised model Code of Conduct for members. Councils had until 1 October 2007 to adopt the revised Code after which time members of local authorities that had not adopted a revised Code would be automatically covered by it. The existing Code would continue in force until such time as the local authority adopted the revised Code, or until 1 October 2007, whichever was the sooner.

The Committee considered the new model Code and noted that it could be adopted as it stood or could include additional provisions which were consistent with the Model Code. Attention was drawn to advice from the Standards Board for England encouraging local authorities to adopt the revised Code as it stood in order to ensure that all members were subject to the same standards across the country.

The Committee noted that a training course had been arranged on the Code of Conduct for District and Parish and Town Councillors at the Civic Offices on 9 May 2007 commencing at 7.30 p.m. Members of the Committee were encouraged to attend.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the District Council be recommended to adopt the revised model Code un-amended;
- (2) That Parish and Town Councils in the District be recommended to adopt the revised model Code un-amended unless they can identify a strong reason for not doing so; and
- (3) That following adoption of the revised model Code the Monitoring Officer be authorised to take the following steps:
 - (a) ensure that copies are available for inspection by the public at all reasonable hours;
 - (b) publish a notice in one or more local newspapers stating that a new Code has been adopted and advising where copies can be inspected; and
 - (c) send a copy to the Standards Board for England.

40. ALLEGATIONS ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF DISTRICT AND PARISH/TOWN COUNCILLORS - CURRENT POSITION

The Committee noted the current position of allegations made to the Standards Board for England regarding District and Parish/Town Councillors.

41. INDEPENDENT MEMBER - VACANCY

The Monitoring Officer reported that the Council had appointed a Selection Panel of District Councillors to secure the recruitment of an Independent Member as a successor to Dr D Hawes on this Committee. Publicity regarding the vacancy had resulted in the issue of 10 recruitment packs to interested parties and out of those 10 requests, 4 applications had been received. All four applicants had met the selection criteria and had been invited for interview by the Panel. One applicant had subsequently withdrawn and the remaining three applicants had attended for interview.

The Selection Panel had included Councillors Mrs D Borton and Mrs P Smith. Dr D Hawes had attended the interviews and had provided an input into the assessment process but had not voted on an appointment. The Panel had also been assisted by the Monitoring Officer and the Deputy Monitoring Officer although, like Dr Hawes, they had taken no part in the final decision and voting on an appointment.

The Committee was advised that the Council at its meeting the previous evening had adopted a recommendation of the Panel that Mr M Wright be appointed to the Committee with effect from the date of resignation of Dr D Hawes, namely 17 May 2007.

Dr D Hawes welcomed Mr Wright attending the meeting as an observer.

42. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that the calendar for 2007/08 provided for meetings of the Committee on 17 July 2007, 16 October 2007, 26 February 2008 and 8 April 2008.

43. DR D HAWES - CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE

Ms M Marshall on behalf of the Committee and officers supporting the Committee made a presentation to Dr D Hawes in appreciation of his work during the last six years. She stated that his experience had been invaluable to other Members of the Committee during his terms of office. Dr D Hawes responded thanking members and officers for their support during this period. The Monitoring Officer expressed thanks to Dr Hawes on behalf of the officers.

CHAIRMAN