



# Epping Forest District Council

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** **Tuesday, 26th February, 2008**

**Place:** Civic Offices, High Street, Epping  
**Room:** Committee Room 1  
**Time:** 7.30 pm  
**Committee Secretary:** G Lunnun, Research and Democratic Services  
Tel: 01992 564244 Email: glunnun@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

### **Members:**

Ms M Marshall (Chairman), G Weltch, M Wright, Councillors Mrs P Smith and Mrs J H Whitehouse

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

Councillors Mrs D Borton, B Surtees (Deputy)

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

#### **2. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 8)**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2007 (attached).

#### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

(Monitoring Officer) To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

#### **4. THE CONDUCT OF LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS - ORDERS AND REGULATIONS (Pages 9 - 52)**

To consider the attached report.

#### **5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE**

##### **Recommendation:**

**To consider asking the Council to review the size of this Committee.**

(Monitoring Officer) In anticipation that the proposals for sub-committees of Standards Committees set out in the consultation document of the Department of

Communities and Local Government (agenda item 4) will be incorporated into the regulations and orders for local assessment, the Committee are invited to express views to the Council on possible changes to the size of this Committee.

Standards Committees must have a minimum of:

- (a) three members (two elected members and one independent member);
- (b) 25% as independent lay members if the Committee is more than three people;
- (c) an independent chairman (from April 2008);
- (d) one parish or town council member if the authority has responsibilities for those councils.

The Standards Board recommends:

- (a) at least six people as a minimum (three elected members and three independent members); and
- (b) two, or possibly three, parish or town council members if the authority has responsibilities for those councils.

## **6. TRAINING FOR LOCAL ASSESSMENT**

**Recommendation:**

**To consider attendance at a course on the local assessment of complaints.**

(Monitoring Officer) LGG, the limited training arm of Solicitors in Local Government and affiliated to the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors are running courses on the Code of Conduct and "Local First Sieve" for members of Standards Committees and officers.

The cost of the course is £3,500 plus VAT and comprises an evening session of approximately three hours. Braintree District Council is making arrangements for a session providing for up to 75 attendees and has invited other Essex authorities to send representatives.

An initial interest has been registered with Braintree District Council. A date has yet to be set. Members are asked to indicate if they would like to attend.

## **7. LOCAL ASSESSMENT - STANDARDS BOARD TRAINING EXERCISE (Pages 53 - 112)**

**Recommendation:**

**To undertake three cases from the Standards Board's training exercise.**

(Monitoring Officer) The Standards Board has created a training exercise to help standards committees develop their ability to assess new complaints. The exercise is based on a pilot that the Standards Board ran in 2007 with approximately 50 participating local authorities.

Details of the exercise are attached. Members will note that the full exercise requires approximately three hours which is considered too long to be addressed at this meeting. The first three cases are attached for members to consider at this time and others can be included on the agenda for the next meeting or at a special session if preferred.

**8. ALLEGATIONS ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF DISTRICT AND PARISH/TOWN COUNCILLORS - CURRENT POSITION (Pages 113 - 114)**

(Monitoring Officer) To note the attached schedule.

**9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

(Monitoring Officer) The calendar for 2007/08 provides for a meeting of the Committee on 8 April 2008.

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

The Council's draft calendar of meetings for 2008/09 provides for meetings of the Committee on 15 July 2008, 13 October 2008, 27 January 2009 and 14 April 2009.

**10. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

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 paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act indicated:

<b>Agenda Item No</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Exempt Information Paragraph Number</b>
Nil	Nil	Nil

To resolve that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items which are confidential under Section 100(A)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972:

<b>Agenda Item No</b>	<b>Subject</b>
Nil	Nil

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 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.