

To: Councillors Taylor (Chair), Barrett-Payton, Dryden, Hymans,  
R Smith, Stebbings.  
External members: Dr A Clark, Ms L Hobbs



Published & despatched: 7 March 2006

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**Date:** Wednesday 15 March 2006  
**Time:** 6.00pm  
**Place:** Committee Room 1, The Guildhall

**Contact:** Gary Clift **Direct Dial:** (01223) 457011

## AGENDA

**The meeting will commence in the Members' Room. A training DVD produced by the Standards Board for England will be shown covering a fictional local investigation, the hearing itself and some challenges which a Standards Committee may encounter.**

### 1 [MINUTES](#)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2005.

Page 1 - 2

### 2 APOLOGIES

### 3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to declare at this stage any interests which they may have in any of the following items on the agenda. If any member is unsure whether or not they should declare an interest on a particular matter, they are requested to seek advice from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services before the meeting.

### 4 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME – see below for detail of the scheme and other public information.

### 5 REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT AND THE ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has now published the Government's response to the Standards Board's recommendations for the review of the Code of Conduct for Members, and to the Graham Committee on Standards of Conduct on Public Life's proposals for a review of the New Ethical Framework. This item sets out the changes which are now proposed by the Government.

The changes to the New Ethical Framework will require an Act of Parliament but the Government intends to include the proposed changes in the next Local Government Bill. These changes would include:

- All standards complaints against Councillors would be made to the Monitoring Officer, rather than to the Standards Board
- Local authorities would refer up to the Standards Board complaints which

they felt unable to investigate or which their Standards Committee would not be able to determine, for example because they related to allegations of very serious misconduct

- The Standards Board would concentrate on monitoring and improving the effectiveness of the system and investigating only the most serious allegations.
- It would be mandatory that the Chair of Standards Committees and Sub-Committees should be co-opted independent members
- The parallel Code of Conduct for Officers should be introduced
- Politically restricted posts will be retained

The main proposed changes to the Code of Conduct for Members, which can be effected by subordinate legislation and may therefore be introduced rather earlier, are as follows:

- No new “offence” of making a false or malicious complaint
- The General Principles should form a preamble to the Code of Conduct
- The “whistleblowing” requirement for members to report other members to the Standards Board should be deleted
- A new “offence” of bullying should be added to the Code of Conduct
- The Code of Conduct should contain an exception for disclosure of confidential information where such disclosure was in the public interest
- Outside official duties, only unlawful conduct should be regarded as likely to bring the member’s office of authority into disrepute
- The “offence” of misuse of public resources should be limited to serious misuse, and the Code of Conduct should define “inappropriate political purposes.”
- The range of interests which require to be registered should be reduced
- The Code should redefine “friend” as “close personal associate”
- Interests arising from membership of another public body, a charity or local pressure group, should not prevent members from discharging their representative role
- Standards Committees should have wider discretion to grant dispensations.
- The current £25 threshold for declaration of gifts and hospitality should be retained and the register of gifts and hospitality should be made public

Further updates will be given to the Standards Committee as the proposals progress.

(Margaret Walker, Director of Central Services – 01223 457325)

## 6 [REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE](#)

(Margaret Walker, Director of Central Services – 01223 457325)

Page 3 - 29

The Council is required to have this Code. Cambridge adopted its first Code in 2002 and it is now time for its annual review. The reviewed Code is attached. As happened at previous reviews, the Council's Civic Affairs Committee will be considering the document en route to full Council, but it is also appropriate to ask this Committee if it wishes to make any comment. The origin and purpose of the Code are explained in its introduction. The national guidance is in italics at the start of each section. The column "Cambridge City Council commits itself to" is also taken from the guidance as to what Codes should contain. Therefore, members of this Committee should focus their attention on the column "How the Council will do this".

## 7 **EXTERNAL MEMBERS** (*Committee Manager*)

(i) The Committee will be updated with the current recruitment of an External Member to replace Ms Hobbs.

(ii) The Committee is also asked to consider the length of term for External Members of the Standards Committee. Dr Clark will have served a four year term in May. The Committee needs to bear in mind that the role of the public is enhanced in the Government's proposals for reviewing Standards Committee membership, and we are in the middle of recruiting to a vacancy in May.

## 8 **DATES OF MEETINGS 2006/07** – to agree a day and time for meetings in June, November, January 2007 and March 2007.

### **Information for the public**

You are welcome to attend this meeting as an observer, although it may be necessary to ask you to leave the room during the discussion of matters which are described as confidential on the agenda.

oOo

You can ask questions on an issue included on the agenda, or on an issue which is within this committee's powers. If you wish to ask a question related to an agenda item contact the committee officer (listed above under 'contact') **before the meeting starts**. If you wish to ask a question on a matter not included on this agenda, please contact the committee officer by 10.00am the working day before the meeting. Further details concerning the right to speak at committee can be obtained from the committee section.

oOo

In the event of the fire alarm sounding (which is a continuous ringing sound), you should pick up your possessions and leave the building by the route you came in. Once clear of the building, you should assemble on the pavement opposite the main entrance to the Guildhall and await further instructions. If your escape route or the assembly area is unsafe, you will be directed to safe areas by a member of Cambridge City Council staff.