

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held on
Wednesday, 14 March 2012 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Kathy English (Independent Member) – Chairman

Members: Nigel Cathcart District Council Member, non-group
Michael Farrar Parish Council Member
Roger Hall District Council Member, Conservative Group
Simon Martin Parish Council Member
Cicely Murfitt District Council Member, non-group
Tony Orgee District Council Member, Conservative Group
Raith Overhill Independent Member
Jim Stewart District Council Member, Liberal Democrat Group

Officers: Holly Adams Democratic Services Team Leader
Fiona McMillan Legal & Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer

Councillors and were in attendance, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Alan Hampton, Diane Best, Rick Bristow, John House, Janet Lockwood, Mary Pilfold-Allan, Eric Revell, Alex Riley and James Williams.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

32. GAMLINGAY PARISH COUNCIL: REQUEST FOR DISPENSATION

Councillor Colin Smith of Gamlingay Parish Council had applied formally for a dispensation to enable him to remain in meetings and to vote on matters concerning the financial affairs of, or regulatory issues concerning, Gamlingay Community Centre. The Standards Committee has granted similar dispensations to all other members of Gamlingay Parish Council.

The Standards Committee **AGREED** to grant a dispensation to Gamlingay Parish Councillor Colin Smith from interests in any matters concerning the financial affairs of, or regulatory issues concerning, Gamlingay Community Centre. This dispensation has been granted until 1 July 2012.

33. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 5 April 2012 at 10 am, but this could be re-scheduled depending upon the timing of the publication of new standards regulations.

The Monitoring Officer updated the Standards Committee on the current progress towards the new standards regime:

- Discussions between the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (ACSeS) and the Local Government Association (LGA) about a model Code of Conduct were on-going;
- In the absence of a draft Code of Conduct and regulations defining the new categories of interest, the Heads of Legal Services at Cambridgeshire authorities and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CAPALC) were minded to recommend that councils adopt paragraphs 3-7 of the existing Code of

- Conduct at their Annual General Meetings;
- ACSeS had sought the opinion of a QC on the possibility of Independent Members of current Standards Committees being appointed as Independent Persons under the new regime. The QC's opinion was that the Localism Act 2011 prohibited such appointments, and it was understood that the government had stated that such prohibition was unintentional and would address the matter in supplementary regulations;
 - Recruitment for Independent Persons would be done jointly with all Cambridgeshire authorities, and unless prohibited by the regulations, procedures would allow the authorities to share Independent Persons if a conflict of interest arose;
 - The Standards Committee would have to consider its future role and remit, or whether its functions could be discharged by another council body. The District Council would retain the responsibility to offer training and guidance on standards matters to parish councils;
 - Any future Standards Committee would have to be politically balanced to reflect the composition of the District Council as a whole; and
 - Parish councils' opinions would be sought on whether or not they wished to have formal representation on the Standards Committee as co-opted members. Legislation did not allow the District Council to extend voting rights to co-opted members, although it was noted that the Standards Committee historically had always agreed everything by consensus rather than by vote.

The Meeting ended at 10.20 a.m.
