

Broads Authority
Standards Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2010

Present:

Mr M Cook (In the Chair)
Mr D Ayre
Mr N Hancox
Mr D R Jones
Mr S Revell
Ms R Varma

In Attendance:

Mr C Brown – Senior Solicitor, Norfolk County Council
Mr R G Holman – Director of Corporate Services
Mr J W Organ – Head of Administration and Executive Assistant

3/1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Gould.

3/2 Matters of Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

3/3 Declaration of Interest

All independent members declared a personal interest in Item 6, on the basis that they were in receipt of an independent member's allowance.

3/4 Minutes of the Standards Committee Meeting on 20 November 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3/5 Public Question Time

There were no questions raised by members of the public.

3/6 Appointment of Independent Members of the Standards Committee

The Head of Administration and Executive Assistant presented a report concerning the appointment of independent members to the Standards Committee, a matter for which the agreement of the full Authority on 17 September 2010 would be required.

RESOLVED

- (i) that an advert should be placed and a selection process held, to allow two independent members to be appointed at the Authority meeting on 17 September 2010;
- (ii) that the Guidance Notes at Appendix 1 of the report, subject to minor alterations, be made available to all applicants;
- (iii) that a recommendation be presented to the Broads Authority that the term for all future independent member appointments should be four years and that the Authority adopts the Standards for England recommendation that members should serve for a maximum of two terms to ensure that independence was not lost; and
- (iv) that a panel consisting of the Chairman of the Authority, Chairman of the Standards Committee and Mr Gould, advised by a representative from the Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, be convened on 29 July 2010 to interview and select applicants for appointment of members to the Standards Committee.

3/7 Scrutiny of Members Registers of Interest

Members' registers of interests were reviewed by the Committee.

RESOLVED

that all existing members be requested to review and update their register of interests.

3/8 Assessment of Ethical Standards in the Broads Authority

The Head of Administration and Executive Assistant explained that the Standards Committee was required to provide an assessment of the ethical standards in the Broads Authority for the Annual Report of the Standards Committee to the Authority.

RESOLVED

that the Committee confirmed its assessment that the ethical standards of the Authority continued to be high.

3/9 Annual Report of the Standards Committee

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Administration and Executive Assistant enclosing the draft Annual Report of the Standards Committee. Once finalised this would be submitted to the Broads Authority at its meeting in September 2010.

RESOLVED

that the Annual Report of the Standards Committee be approved, subject to the following amendments:

- (i) the report would make it clear that the report covered the period up to the 7 June 2010 Standards Committee meeting;
- (ii) an additional paragraph would be inserted concerning members noting that there were proposals for changes to the Standards for England body and that the Authority would need to respond to any changes appropriately; and
- (iii) the assessment of ethical standards in the Authority would be recorded as continuing to be high.

3/10 Attendance at 2010 Annual Assembly of Standards Committees

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Administration and Executive Assistant concerning member attendance at the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees.

RESOLVED

that Mr Gould should represent the Authority at the Annual Assembly and feed back key points to the remainder of the Committee.

3/11 Change of Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

The Committee received a report by the Head of Administration and Executive Assistant concerning the appointment of Ms Victoria McNeill as the Broads Authority's Solicitor and Monitoring Officer with effect from 1 April 2010. The Chairman advised that he would write to Mr Hounsome, on behalf of the Standards Committee, expressing thanks for his support to the Standards Committee.

The Committee noted the report.

3/12 Broads Authority Act 2009: Standards Appeal Panel and Water Skiing and Wakeboarding Appeals Panel

The Committee received a report by the Head of Administration and Executive Assistant concerning an update on the action taken to produce procedures and provide training for the Standards Appeals Panel and the Water Skiing and Wakeboarding Appeals Panel established by the Broads Authority Act 2009.

The Committee noted the report.

3/13 Report on the Standards for England Conference 2009

The Committee received verbal reports from Mr Revell and Ms Varma on the Standards for England Conference 2009.

There had been a large debate on whether to keep the Standards for England body, though breakout sessions demonstrated that higher standards would probably be required in future to raise public confidence in elected members. Members noted that the Government was currently considering the future status of the Standards for England body.

The Conference also recognised the need for a good independent chair for Standards Committees and that there was a need to raise the Standards Committees' profiles with members, staff and the general public. Continuous development of members in standards and ethics was also highlighted as important and members noted that the three most common breaches of the Code of Conduct involved failing to treat people with respect, taking the Authority into disrepute and failing to declare interests.

The Committee noted the reports.

3/14 Standards for England Annual Return

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Administration and Executive Assistant concerning the Annual Return to the Standards Board.

The Committee noted the report.

3/15 Assessment Made Clear: Local Assessment of Complaints

The Committee viewed the Standards for England DVD concerning the local assessment of complaints about elected or co-opted members.

The Committee noted the points contained within the DVD.

3/16 New Code of Conduct for Members

The Committee received a report by the Monitoring Officer concerning the delay in laying the new Code of Conduct for Members before Parliament.

The Committee noted the report.

3/17 Communicating Standards

The Chairman considered that all full, co-opted and independent members were well aware of the work of the Standards Committee, but that more information should be made available to staff and the general public. Consideration would be given to place the Standards Committee's Annual Report to the Broads Authority more prominently on the website. Members were also reminded to provide relevant articles on the work of the Standards

Committee within the Members' Bulletin. The Chairman advised that he would provide an article reflecting on his time as Chairman of the Standards Committee prior to the end of his appointment.

3/18 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 13 October 2010 at 2:00pm in Dragonfly House, 2 Gilders Way, Norwich.

Since this was Mr Cook's last Standards Committee meeting, members recorded their thanks for his sterling work during his tenure as Chairman of the Standards Committee.

The meeting concluded at 3:40pm

Chairman