

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON THURSDAY 13 JULY 2006**

MEMBERS

* Mr I Stolliday – Chairman

ø Dr L Durman - Vice-Chairman

ø Cllr J S Beer

* Mr M Winterton

* Cllr G Date

* Denotes attendance

ø Denotes apology for absence

Also in attendance:

All items – Member Support Services Manager
Item 5 (minute ref S.6/06 below) – Internal Audit Manager

In attendance for observation purposes:

Cllr D W S Thorning
Legal Assistant

S.4/06

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 June 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

S.5/06

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting, these were recorded as follows:-

Cllr G Date declared a personal interest in item 7: 'Member's Attendance – Annual Review 2005/2006', by virtue of him being a Member of the District Council. He remained in the meeting during the discussion and vote on this item.

S.6/06

**REVIEW OF THE LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE
GOVERNANCE FOR SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Consideration was given to a report which informed Members of the results of the annual testing and monitoring exercise to ensure compliance with the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance.

In summary, appendices A to E of the report, as circulated, demonstrated that the Council had discharged its responsibilities under the Code with satisfactory results, subject to the completion of some tasks for which an action plan had been agreed with the responsible officer.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- i. Scrutiny's position on the analysis of the report which it considered at its meeting on 1 June 2006 (SC.05/06 refers). The Council's Scrutiny was of the opinion that this was largely a bureaucratic exercise and brought no further significant information to light than what was already known;
- ii. the review of the Freedom of Information Policy which was in progress. It was noted that the policy would incorporate guidelines for the charging of information requests under the Freedom of Information Act;
- iii. the likelihood of an imposed Code of Conduct for Officers, similar to existing codes for Councillors. The code had been drafted by the Council's Head of Personnel and Payroll and was due for adoption shortly.

RESOLVED

That the findings of the report be noted and the action plan approved.

S.7/06

REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT AND THE NEW ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

A report was presented which set out the government's response to the recommendations of the Standards Board for England on the review of the Code of Conduct and to the Graham Committee on Standards of Conduct in Public Life's proposals for a review of the new Ethical Framework. Members considered a model report for Standard's Committees which summarised the government's response to both publications and set out its proposed changes.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- a) localisation of the system for investigating and determining alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct. As detailed in appendix 1 of the circulated report, highlighted was the change in policy which entailed the initial complaint being sent to the Monitoring Officer for consideration. It was felt that although this was practical in terms of dealing with issues locally and speeding up

the process, there would be resource implications to consider;

- b) declarations of interest and the particular problem for Members who served on different public bodies and were involved in campaign or issue groups. The guidelines noted that it was anticipated that certain rules regarding prejudicial interests would be relaxed to allow Members to speak on the matter and answer questions prior to withdrawing when the debate and vote ensued;
- c) wider discretion to grant dispensations. The Group had not yet received any applications for a dispensation and it was perceived that this may be due to the lack of information available to town and parish councils. It was therefore suggested that town and parish clerks be contacted to clarify what a dispensation was and the circumstances in which one could be granted.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

S.8/06 MEMBER'S ATTENDANCE – ANNUAL REVIEW 2005 / 2006

Consideration was given to a report which demonstrated the level of Member's attendance at public meetings of the Council for the municipal year 2005/2006. The report noted that the performance target for councillors was to attend at least 50% of all meetings of the bodies to which they had been appointed. This target had been attained and the Committee therefore wanted to record its congratulations to Members for their exemplary set of statistics.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

(meeting commenced at 2.00pm and concluded at 2.45pm)

Chairman