

Standards Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 7th September 2009

Present:

Mr Snadden – In the Chair
Councillors Ali, Burns, Evans, O'Callaghan and Whitmore.
Mrs A. Isles

ST/09/6 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd June 2009.

ST/09/7 Granting of Dispensations

The Committee considered dispensation applications from seven members of the Executive, so as to allow them to participate in the consideration by and decisions of the Executive in relation to the Cooperative Complex regeneration proposals.

A report of the City Solicitor was also submitted indicating that the Standards Committee (Further Provisions) (England) Regulations 2009 allowed the Standards Committee to grant dispensations to members if more than half of the members entitled or required to participate at the relevant meeting would not otherwise be able to participate, or if the political balance of the meeting would be so upset by members being unable to participate that its outcome would be prejudiced.

The Committee noted that, given the precautionary approach of treating involvement in the cooperative movement as being potentially prejudicial, more than half of the members otherwise entitled to participate in consideration of the Cooperative Complex regeneration proposals at the Executive would not be able to do so. The circumstances were therefore accepted as being relevant for consideration under the 2009 Regulations, in terms of granting dispensations to those members so affected.

The Committee noted that the application related only to meetings of the Executive and not to meetings of the City Council or any committee of the Council.

Decision

To grant the requests for dispensations received from Councillors Amesbury, Andrews, J. Battle, Cowell, S. Murphy, S. Newman, and Stevens, to enable them to speak and vote in respect of any issues arising in meetings of the Executive regarding the Cooperative Complex regeneration proposals, for a period of four years, or, if shorter, until such time as the number of members of the Executive with such an interest falls below six.

(Councillors Burns and O'Callaghan declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item as a member of the Cooperative Party and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the item)

ST/09/8 Public Perception of Ethics

The Committee considered a report of the City Solicitor in relation to a report produced by Standards for England, the operating name of the Standards Board for England, that measured and monitored the public's perceptions of local councillors' ethical standards and their confidence in the mechanisms for dealing with shortcomings in behaviour.

The report demonstrated that the research showed that the public perception of councillors was better than that of MPs and Standards for England indicated that this reflected the robust Code of Conduct and an effective local standards framework which dealt with 2,800 complaints a year about England's 80,000 local politicians.

Members suggested that the strong discipline exercised within political groups in Manchester was also a strong influence on councillors' behaviour. The Chair felt that the high level of corporate identity in Manchester was a clear influence in creating cohesion within the authority at all levels in a way that was not always apparent in smaller authorities, but he suggested that interpretation of the findings would have been enhanced by a breakdown between different types of Council.

Decision

To note the report.

ST/09/9 Panel dates

The Sub Committee considered a report of the City Solicitor proposing a series of dates for panel meetings during the year. The Committee had previously approved the establishment of panels each chaired by a different independent member and comprising different elected members, to (a) undertake the assessment of allegations made under section 57A of the Local Government Act 2000 (b) consider any request made under section 57B of the Act for a review of any decisions to take no action in respect of the assessment of an allegation, and (c) to discharge the function of holding hearings in connection with investigations.

Decision

To approve the following schedule of dates and to agree that meetings be held at 9.30 am –

Cycle 2

Panel C 21 September
Panel A 5 October
Panel B 19 October
Panel C 2 November

Cycle 3

Panel A 16 November
Panel B 30 November
Panel C 14 December

Cycle 4

Panel A 11 January 2010
Panel B 25 January
Panel C 8 February

Cycle 5

Panel A 8 March
Panel B 22 March
Panel C 29 March

ST/09/10 Register of Interests

The Register was presented for inspection by members.