

# EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

## Minutes of a Meeting of the Standards Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 20 March 2007

<b>Present:</b>	Dr J A Rees (Chairman)	Independent member
	Cllr G P Chamberlain	EDDC Councillor
	Cllr Mrs A E Liverton	EDDC Councillor
	Mrs J A Durrant	Independent member
	Cllr S P Pollentine	Parish representative
	Cllr P Bowden	Parish representative

<b>Apologies:</b>	Mr E Butt	Independent member
	Cllr Lt Col A J M Drake	EDDC Councillor
	Cllr Mrs L A Roden	EDDC Councillor
	Cllr C Pole Carew	Parish representative

The meeting started at 10.00am and ended at 11.30am

### \*14 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 31 January 2007, were confirmed and signed as a true record.

### \*15 **Revised draft Code of Conduct for Members and Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill**

#### Revised draft Code of Conduct for Members

Members considered the report of the Head of Legal and Member Services with regard to proposed changes to the Code of Conduct. The Government hoped to give the Code statutory force in March 2007. It would then require adoption by this Council and parish councils within six months from May 2007. It was most likely that the Code would be adopted at this Council's Annual Council meeting on 23 May 2007.

Members noted that the draft revised Code included a number of relaxations from the requirements of the current code. These included the deletion of the duty on Members to report breaches of the Code by other Members and the limiting of the obligation to disclose a personal interest of a family member, friend or close personal associate to those that the Member is aware of, or ought reasonably to be aware of. In addition the draft revised Code provided for a Member, otherwise having a prejudicial interest, to attend a meeting for the purpose of making representations, answering questions, or giving evidence, provided the meeting agrees and subject to the Member withdrawing after so doing. Members were advised that a guidance/policy note would be drawn up on this proposal with particular regard made to planning meetings. Members were of the view that Members should not be allowed to speak about their own applications at planning meetings when members of the public could not do so.

Additional obligations included in the draft revised Code included the obligation not to bully, not to intimidate a person involved in proceedings under the Code and extended the provision on the use of the authority's resources to include having regard to the Local Authority Code of Publicity. The Head of Legal and Member Services agreed to provide Members of the Committee with a copy of this Code of Publicity.

**\*15 Revised draft Code of Conduct for Members and Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill (Cont.)**

Members were advised that a copy of the current Code of Conduct had been included in the packs for prospective Councillors. After the elections, training sessions would be held on the new Code to which all Councillors, including Parish Councillors, and Clerks to Parish Councils would be invited.

It was suggested that a record should be kept of which Parish Clerks did not attend Code of Conduct training provided by the District Council. However it was noted that the Devon Association of Parish Councils (DAPC) also offered training to Clerks and Parish Councillors. Efforts would be made to share training events with the DAPC so far as possible

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill

Members were advised that this Bill, which was expected to come into force in April 2008, would broaden the remit of Standards Committees. It was proposed that Standards Committees would act as a sieve. They would receive allegations made and determine which should be investigated further. Given that a significant number of allegations received by the Standards Board were minor and not investigated further, it was hoped that some of the allegations could be delegated to Officers to determine. Members considered the possibility of linking up with other Districts to share the work load which could result from the Bill.

**RESOLVED**

- 1 that the content of the draft revised Code of Conduct for Members, its implications for this council and the parish councils of East Devon and the arrangements being made to offer information and support to District and Parish Council Members be noted;
- 2 that the constitutional and legal changes in the operation of the Code of Conduct and the proposed extension of the role of the Standards Committee when the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill becomes law be noted.

**\*16 Date of next meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Standards Committee would take place on Tuesday, 9 October 2007. The Chairman gave his apologies in advance for this meeting.

Chairman ..... Date.....