

BOROUGH OF REIGATE AND BANSTEAD
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held at the Town Hall, Reigate on Wednesday, 9th February 2011 at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Councillors S.A. Kulka, R.C. Newstead and Mrs. R.S. Turner.

Mr. R. Bethell - Horley Town Council
Mrs. D. Brooke-Hart* - Horley Town Council
Mrs. J.A. Cook - Salfords and Sidlow Parish Council

Mr. P. Allen
Mrs. A. Armstrong
Mr. J. Broadbent#
Dr. C. Vaughan

} Independent members

Chairman * Part meeting

24. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed.

25. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Mrs. F.D.M. Dixon and Mrs. H.E. Burr (Independent Member).

26. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

27. **CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

A report was submitted with the annual position statement on compliance with the Council's code of corporate governance.

The report set out relevant statutory powers, information on good corporate governance in local government, the Council's annual report/ position statement, details of consultation, legal, financial and equality implications and policy framework considerations.

The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26th January 2011 and a schedule of its comments, together with officer observations (to be submitted to the Executive on 24th February 2011) was tabled at the Standards Committee meeting and discussed.

The Head of Legal and Property Services answered a number of questions by Members and undertook to clarify the position on the cascade of information, particularly from Leaders meetings to Councillors.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

28. **PLANNING COMMITTEE SITE INSPECTIONS**

In accordance with its terms of reference, the Committee considered a report reviewing current practice for requesting and holding planning site inspections. Appended to the report at Annex A was a copy of the existing Protocol; Annex B set out an amended Protocol for the consideration of the Committee, based upon the outcomes of a review.

The report reviewed the purpose of site inspections and included a comparative analysis of the numbers of site inspections undertaken by other Surrey authorities. It concluded that, during the past municipal year Reigate and Banstead Borough Council had held 37 site inspections, as compared with 10 by one neighbouring authority and less than five by all other Surrey local authorities who responded.

The purpose and relevance of site inspections fell into two main categories: concern about the effect of a development on the character of the area; and aspects of the development which could only be properly understood when viewed from within the site.

The amended Protocol proposed that, where a site inspection had been requested because of concerns about the character of the area, Members should make their own arrangements to view the location at their own convenience because an internal inspection of the site would not be necessary to form a view.

Formal site inspections, accompanied by an officer, would be held only where it was agreed that the implications of an application could not be fully understood without entering the site, with the Chairman retaining the prerogative of declining a request for a formal inspection if, in consultation with officers, it was deemed to be unnecessary.

In cases where a formal site inspection was necessary, the Protocol emphasised the importance of conducting the visit in a business-like manner, restricting its purpose to gathering information and avoiding any lobbying or general discussion of the application.

The revised Protocol had been endorsed by the Planning Committee at its meeting on 27th October 2010. Various issues were discussed by Members following which it was:

RECOMMENDED that the amended protocol on Planning Committee site inspections set out in Appendix B to the circulated report be adopted and incorporated in the Council's constitution with effect from 9th May 2011.

29. REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

The Committee received a report on a review of the Council's Constitution, primarily to reflect a change to the Council's decision making arrangements to a new style Leader and cabinet model from May 2011 under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

The report set out relevant statutory powers, information on the current constitution and the requirement for change and a summary of proposed changes. The report also included legal, financial and equality implications, consultation undertaken and policy framework considerations.

The revised constitution would be the subject of future review to ensure it operated in an efficient and effective way.

RESOLVED that the revised constitution, as being recommended to Council for adoption, be endorsed.

30. ABOLITION OF THE STANDARDS BOARD REGIME

The Committee received a copy of correspondence from the Chair of Standards for England on the planned abolition of the Standards regime through the Localism Bill. The Head of Legal and Property Services undertook to circulate a schedule of major changes under the Bill to Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED to note.

31. WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11 AND 2011/12

RESOLVED that the work programme 2010/11 and 2011/12 be noted.

32. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

The meeting closed at 8.29 p.m.