



Report to Standards Committee

Date: 7 October 2005

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Subject: Parish Meetings

Members will recall that the Committee resolved to meet with the Parish Clerks and Chairs to continue to debate with them as to their experiences of the working of the Code of Conduct and the ethical agenda in general.

Notes of the meetings which have taken place to date are attached at **Appendix 2**.

Members are requested to note the position

**NOTES OF A MEETING
BETWEEN
THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
AND
CALVERTON PARISH COUNCIL**

19 AUGUST 2005

Present: **Calverton Parish Council**
Parish Councillor Grant Withers - Chairman
Jane Stone - Parish Clerk

Gedling Borough Council
John Lesquereux - Chairman Standards Committee
Councillor John Boot - Standards Committee
Sue Sale - Monitoring Officer

Code

The Parish Council representatives confirmed that the Parish Council had adopted the Code of Conduct and felt that the Parish Councillors had a good understanding of its provisions. In the event that a prejudicial interest was declared the member involved would leave the meeting.

There was a declaration of personal interest 1 or 2 times per meeting.

The Parish members felt that the new Code of Conduct was less clear than the previous requirements for the declaration of interests.

New Members

The induction of new members was done after the Parish elections. The Parish had not needed to co-opt members for some years so all the new members arrived at the same time. The induction process included the provision of copies of the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Code of Conduct for new members.

Difficulties with the Code

1. Duty to report breaches of the Code

The members were aware of the duty. The Chairman felt that this was a matter left to individual members' conscience.

2. Dual-Hatted Members

The Parish members were discomfited by the requirement to withdraw from meetings where they were members of another authority in circumstances where the member had made their position clear at Parish level.

In particular, the members found it difficult to explain to the public their apparent unwillingness to represent their declared view.

Training

The Parish Council were happy with the training provided by the Borough Council. They were also made aware of training provided by NALC which was available to their members.

It was usual for the Clerk to undertake training and then pass on the salient points to members.

The Clerk was relatively new to the role and had found that there was no general introductory training available. It was agreed that the Borough Council would consider what assistance might be available.

Relationship with the Borough Council

Most of the contact with the Borough Council had been with the Direct Services Department through the works contracts carried out by the Borough. When other enquiries had arisen, no problems had been encountered in dealing with the Borough. It was felt that the relationship was good.

Complaints Procedure

A procedure was adopted but was rarely required.

Communication

The Parish published their minutes in the local paper and made them available in the local library.

They did not have a dedicated Parish news sheet.

Other Issues

Standing Orders - the Parish had used the SLCC toolkit and individualised the model provided.

Financial Procedures - these were in place and worked successfully. The Council controls the budget and the Clerk manages it.

Equal Opportunities - no problems.

Respect for Others - some robust behaviour but felt to be within limits.

Use of Resources - no problems.

Confidentiality - almost all Parish business was conducted in public. The exception would be staffing issues eg appointment of Parish Clerk.

Gifts and Hospitality - not an issue.

Register of Interests - no difficulties had been encountered in getting these completed.

**NOTES OF A MEETING BETWEEN
THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
AND
NEWSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL
WEDNESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2005**

Present: **Linby Parish Council**
John Chisholm – Clerk, Newstead Parish Council
Tricia Wise – Chairman Newstead Parish Council

Gedling Borough Council
John Bagguley – Standards Committee
Councillor Chris Pratt – Standards Committee
Sue Sale – Monitoring Officer

CODE OF CONDUCT

The Parish did not have any difficulties with the application of the Code. They feel that if their business was conducted with common sense and courtesy this largely militated against the code transgressions.

The Council took advice from the Clerk where necessary on declarations of interest although declarations were rarely required.

The Parish has no dual hatted members; Borough and County Councillors were always invited to meetings and provided with a copy of the minutes.

Meetings were well attended by the public and the Parish works closely with the two resident associations to build community sustainability.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Parish Council were aware of the resource available to it at the Borough Council but had not felt the need to access this.

COMPLAINTS

Complaints were dealt with on an ad hoc basis and mostly concerned the Parish land holdings, particularly the management of the cemetery. Complaints were dealt with in the public meeting. The Council had a 20 minute slot in each meeting where Standing Orders were suspended giving the public the opportunity to debate issues with the members. Complaints were given a full airing in this time.

STANDING ORDERS/FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Council had adopted the models from NALC/SLCC and amended these to suit the Parish Council.

TRAINING

Little formal training had been received but the members were mutually supportive. They would like to consider further training on the code.

The Clerk was the only employee so issues of employment, equal opportunities etc had not been an issue for them.

The Council and Clerk sought assistance from the Borough Council with any difficulties and were happy with the response received.

**NOTES OF A MEETING BETWEEN
THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
AND
LINBY PARISH COUNCIL
MONDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2005**

Present: **Linby Parish Council**
John Chisholm – Parish Clerk
Bob Brothwell – Chairman Linby Parish Council

Gedling Borough Council
John Bagguley – Standards Committee
Councillor Chris Pratt – Standards Committee
Sue Sale – Monitoring Officer

CODE OF CONDUCT

The code has been explained to Parish members in detail. Up to about 8 years ago there had been problems in the Parish Council but these had been resolved.

Linby is a small close community and no issues have arisen over the declaration of interests. The Council has only one co-opted member and the Chairman inducted that member personally including an explanation of the code.

The Council has no dual hatted members so conflict does not arise, though Borough and County Members often attend meetings.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Parish Council are aware that the Borough Council Standards Committee has responsibilities for the Parish but don't feel the need for any particularly closer working relationship. The Borough Council is used a source of advice on legal and procedural issues as and when needed.

COMPLAINTS

There is no formal complaints procedure but complaints received are given a public airing at the Parish Council meeting. Complaints received are not about the work of the Parish Council.

COMMUNICATION

Linby has been assessed as a "vibrant" village and the Parish members adopt a hands on approach to getting work done.

The Parish notice boards are kept up to date and an account of meetings is published in the Hucknall Despatch.

The Chairman is the spokesman for the Council,

STANDING ORDERS/FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Council has adopted the NALC models with local variations.

TRAINING

The Parish has no employees other than the Clerk and no contracts.

The evidence from other parishes is in that legislation such as the Freedom of Information Act could be a serious burden since the Parish Clerk's hours are restricted, but to date they have not had any problems.

There is no immediate training requirement although if the Parish were to expand some assistance may be required.