

AGENDA ITEM NO: 12

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

AT A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD AT WELLINGTON HOUSE ON FRIDAY 9 MARCH 2007

PRESENT:- Mrs C Stephenson (Chair)
Councillors R Downes, G Phelps, E Smaje

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor C Townsley.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no personal or prejudicial interests declared by Members at the meeting.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2006 be approved.

4. REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

The Committee considered a report of the Clerk and Chief Financial Officer on the Members' Allowances Scheme proposed for 2007/08.

Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances

Members were informed that under the 2003 Local Authority Members Allowances Regulations, a revised scheme was required to be approved, each year, before the start of the financial year.

Members reviewed the scheme and in view of the fact that there had been no significant changes to the responsibilities of Members, proposed that no revisions be made other than to update the cost of the basic and special responsibility allowances by 2.95% to reflect the percentage increased granted to the Executive's staff on 1 April 2006.

Travelling and Subsistence Expenses

It was reported that new rates for Travelling and Subsistence expenses were expected to be announced shortly and that Schedule 3 of the scheme would be amended to reflect the new rates when received. Members would be notified of any changes in rates which would apply from 1 April 2007.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the proposed Members' Allowances Scheme be recommended from 1 April 2007.
- (b) That the scheme be amended from 1 April 2007 for any revised travelling and expenses rates subsequently issued by the Executive for their staff.

5. MONITORING OFFICER PROTOCOL

The Committee considered a report of the Clerk on the Monitoring Officer protocol.

Members were informed that the Monitoring Officer protocol had originally been approved by the Standards Committee on 11 February 2005, but that the External Auditor had, in his Annual Audit Letter for 2006, recommended that the roles and responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer as they operated in practice be approved by the Audit & Governance Committee. The protocol was approved by that Committee on 2 March 2007.

Members were informed that no changes had been made to the protocol and that it was being submitted to the Committee purely for information and clarification of the links which operate for the Monitoring Officer within the Authority.

RESOLVED - That the protocol and monitoring arrangements be approved.

6. REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS AND GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

The Committee considered a report of the Clerk updating Members on the Register of Personal and Prejudicial Interests and information relating to gifts and hospitality declared by Members during 2006/07.

Register of Interests

The Committee were informed that, in accordance with the Authority's model Code of Conduct, it had a statutory obligation to keep a register of members' financial and other interests. The register is reviewed every six months by the Clerk.

Gifts and Hospitality

It was reported that, in accordance with the Authority's Code of Conduct for Members, it was necessary for any gifts and hospitality with a value over £25 to be declared in writing to the Authority's Monitoring Officer within 28 days. Declarations were kept on a register which was available for inspection upon request and which is reviewed every six months by the Clerk. The Committee were provided with details of gifts and hospitality declared by Members during 2006/07.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

7. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

The Committee considered a report of the Clerk on a proposed new Code of Conduct for local authority members.

It was reported that the Authority's Code of Conduct had been approved in 2002 and was based on the national model code issued by the government. The Department for Communities and Local Government had recently reviewed the model code and issued a consultation document on proposed amendments.

Members were informed that the Standards Board for England welcomed the proposed changes to the Code which contained most of the recommendations made by them during the consultation process with local government. It was therefore proposed that the Authority should not take any action.

Members noted that the revised Code was intended to be tabled in Parliament later in March and asked that it subsequently be submitted to the Standards Committee for consideration, together with a timetable for implementation.

The Chair suggested that once the revised Code was published it may be appropriate to arrange training for Members. Members agreed that this would be useful and suggested that this should also be incorporated in the induction training offered to all new Members of the Authority.

The Chair drew the Committee's attention to a Standards Board for England Roadshow taking place in Leeds on 7 June on the revised Code of Conduct and suggested that an officer and/or Member should attend.

RESOLVED -

- (a)** That Members note the consultation document.
- (b)** That, once published, the revised model Code of Conduct be submitted to the Standards Committee for consideration, together with a timetable for implementation.

- (c) That, once implemented, training on the revised Code of Conduct be arranged for Members and that training on the Authority's Code of Conduct be incorporated in future induction training for new Members of the Authority.
- (d) That appropriate Authority representation be arranged at the Standards Board for England Roadshow on 7 June.

8. STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND : BULLETINS 31 & 32

The Committee considered a report of the Clerk informing Members of the latest Standards Board Bulletins published in November 2006 and February 2007.

Members were informed that the Bulletins, which were published every few months, were a summary of news and guidance for Officers and Members which provided the latest news, features and guidance on the Code of Conduct and the work of the Standards Board for England.

Members commented that they felt the Bulletins were informative and wished to continue receiving them, but that they would also find it useful if particular items of relevance to the Authority were highlighted and summarised.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the Committee be provided with a summary highlighting particular items of relevance contained within the Standards Board Bulletins.