

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

27th June 2012

Present: Councillors: Andrew Baldwin, David Coldwell, Sheila Matthews, Godfrey Newman

Parish Council Representatives: Val Court, Isabel Glenister

Independent Representatives: Eric Blackburn, Paul Byford, Mary Jagger, David Tilsley

Apologies: Councillors: Brian Donnelly, Claire Vickers

SC/11 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30th May 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SC/12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SC/13 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman congratulated Paul Byford and Mary Jagger on their appointment (subject to confirmation by the Council) as Independent Person and reserve Independent Person under the revised Standards Regime.

The Monitoring Officer reminded Members that this was the last meeting of the Committee under the current regime and referred to Eric Blackburn's nine years of service to the Council, first as a member of the Independent Remuneration Panel and subsequently as an Independent Member and Chairman of the Standards Committee. During his seven years on the Standards Committee, he had not missed a single meeting of the Committee. Members of the Committee and officers thanked Mr Blackburn for his service.

SC/14 **STANDARDS COMMITTEE REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION**

The list was noted.

SC/15 **REPORT BY PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES**

There was nothing to report.

SC/16 **THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW 2011/12**

The Monitoring Officer reported on the number, nature and current position in respect of complaints about the Council to the Local Government Ombudsman for the 2011/12 reporting year.

The Ombudsman prepared annual statistics for each local authority, presented in the form of an Annual Review and the Council's Annual Review for 2011/12 had now been received.

Fifteen complaints had been received about the Council in the year 2011/12 up to 31 March 2011, five fewer than in 2010/11.

Planning and development had generated most complaints, 10 in total, of which five had been forwarded for investigation. One other complaint, in respect of corporate and other services, had also been forwarded for investigation.

Decisions had been issued in respect of nine complaints. In one case it had been determined that there was no reason to use exceptional powers and advice was given to the Council; in three cases it had been determined that an investigation was not justified; in one case it had been determined that there was not enough evidence of fault; in three cases it had been determined that there was no or a minor injustice to the complainant; and in one case an injustice was remedied during enquiries.

The average time taken by the Council to reply to the Ombudsman's written enquiries had been 31 days compared with 23.5 days last year. The target response time was 28 days.

Overall, the Local Government Ombudsman had indicated that she had no concerns about the authority's response times and there were no issues arising from the complaints that she wished to bring to the Council's attention.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

REASONS

- (i) To ensure that the Committee has the necessary information to ensure that complaints can be made to the Council with ease and that they are dealt with appropriately.
- (ii) To assist with establishing learning lessons so that the Council can improve its performance in the provision of its services.

SC/17 **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent matters to be considered.

The Chairman, in drawing the meeting to a close, made a statement regarding the functioning of the Committee over the last seven years and expressed his thanks to Members, Independent Members, Parish Council Representatives, the Monitoring Officer and her staff for their service during this time. He also thanked Councillor Claire Vickers and the Chairman's Standards Liaison Group for overseeing the introduction of the revised Standards regime.

The meeting finished at 11.18am having commenced at 11.00am.

CHAIRMAN