

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
16th September 2015

Present: Councillors: Ian Howard (Chairman), David Coldwell (Vice-Chairman), Mike Morgan, Godfrey Newman

Also in attendance: Christian Mitchell

Advisory members

Present: Parish Council Representatives: Val Court, Kieran Diamond
Independent Persons: John Donaldson

Apologies: Councillors: Brian Donnelly, Brian O'Connell, Tricia Youtan
Independent Persons: Mary Jagger

SC/9 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th June 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SC/10 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SC/11 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that Council had approved the appointment of Val Court and Kieran Diamond to the Committee at the Council meeting on 9th September.

SC/12 **ETHICAL FRAMEWORK UPDATE**

The Monitoring Officer presented the report on developments in the ethical framework that affected the role and activities of Councillors and the Council's business, including:

- **Training and awareness**: The Monitoring Officer had conducted a training session for new Members in July, which had included the Constitution and the Code of Conduct.

Further to the induction events that had taken place since the elections in May, additional training sessions had provisionally been proposed on Equalities and Diversity, Media and Communications, Ethical Governance and IT surgeries. The Monitoring Officer would take this forward, and any relevant sessions arranged would be open to all members of the Standards Committee.

SC/12 Ethical Framework Update (Cont.)

The need for formal training for Parish Councillors was also discussed and it was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would contact all Parishes asking what their training needs were with a view to setting up a district wide training session for Parish Councillors.

The Independent Persons Conference, hosted by Horsham District Council, had been held at the Capitol Theatre on 17th July. This was discussed under item 5 (b) on the agenda.

- Local assessment, review, other action, investigations and determinations:

There had been one new complaint assessed by the Local Assessment Sub-Committee since the last ethical update on 18th March 2015. Whilst it had been agreed that no further action should be taken on the allegation, it was recommended that all Members be offered training in media handling, and that the Press Office introduce a protocol. The Monitoring Officer would report details of the agreed protocol at a future meeting.

Two further complaints had been received relating to Parish Councillors, which had not yet been assessed.

- Parish Clerks' Meetings: The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer had attended the HALC Clerks meeting on 19th May 2015. The Development Manager had also attended and given an overview of the Planning Department.

- Register of Interests: All District Councillors had completed a new Members Interest form since the May elections. The Monitoring Officer had reviewed the forms and contacted individual Members where there was a query.

- Work Programme update: A review of the local standards regime would be required during the current municipal year, following the resolution of Council by May 2014. It was proposed that the review should commence in February or March 2016. It was therefore agreed that at the next meeting a working group would be appointed, and the Monitoring Officer would present a short report on proposed actions for the review.

- Case summaries: Members noted the two cases from other local authorities, as printed in Appendix 4 of the report.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted.

REASONS

- i) To ensure that the Committee, the Members of the Council and others to whom the report is circulated are kept up to date with developments in the ethical framework.

SC/12 Ethical Framework Update (Cont.)

- ii) To promote and maintain high standards of conduct amongst Members.

SC/13 **REPORT ON THE SUSSEX INDEPENDENT PERSONS CONFERENCE**

A Sussex Independent Persons Conference had been hosted by Horsham District Council on 17th July. The conference had been very well attended, with every Sussex Council represented, apart from one. Its purpose had been to address the potentially isolated nature of the role of Independent Persons and there had been positive feedback about the event.

Members discussed the importance of ensuring another similar event be held in the future. Another local authority had expressed an interest in doing so, and the Monitoring Officer would follow this up.

The nature of the Parish Council Representative's role and its similarities to the Independent Persons' role were noted and the Committee discussed the importance of ensuring that both Parish Council Representatives and Independent Persons were supported through networking and training.

The meeting finished at 11.00am having commenced at 10.00am.

CHAIRMAN