

Standards Committee
13 MARCH 2019

Present: Councillors: David Coldwell (Chairman), Mike Morgan (Vice-Chairman), Peter Burgess, Brian Donnelly, Michael Willett, Philip Baxter and Val Court

Apologies: Councillors: Godfrey Newman and John Donaldson

Absent: Councillors: Paul Marshall

SC/15 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 September were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SC/16 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

SC/17 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman of the Committee announced that Val Court, co-opted Parish Representative on this Committee for a number of years, was retiring from her role as Parish Councillor and therefore also leaving the Standards Committee. The Chairman, on behalf of the Council and the Committee, thanked Val for her work over the years.

SC/18 **STANDARDS UPDATE: MARCH 2019**

The Monitoring Officer stated that the report by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL), following their review of the structures, processes and practice in local government, had been published in January 2019. The Committee noted the terms of reference for this review, which included maintaining the Code of Conduct for local councillors, investigating alleged breaches and imposing sanctions.

The monitoring officer reported the CSPL's recommendations to government. Some changes in legislation had been proposed, most notably the proposal to introduce the right to suspend a Member for up to six months. Members welcomed this proposal as a way of giving local authorities more teeth when dealing with Code of Conduct breaches.

Of particular interest to this Committee were the 15 recommendations on best practice as set out in Appendix A of the Standards Committee report. The Monitoring officer was in the process of streamlining information regarding making Code of Conduct Complaints on the Council website to ensure

consistency and ease of access. These best practice recommendations could be incorporated into this online complaints procedure.

Members noted that a new model Code of Conduct was to be introduced by the CSPL to help bring consistency between difference councils.

Members discussed the role of the Independent Person and how much weight should be given to their opinion. On any occasion where their opinion might be at variance with the Monitoring Officer, the Chairman considered that a decision should be made by a Standards sub-committee.

The Committee resolved that early in the new Council Year the Committee would:

- Review the current procedures for dealing with complaints to ensure they are effective, open and straightforward.
- Review the Council's Code of Members' Conduct. This would include a definition of 'bullying' and dealing with behaviour towards Council officers and Parish clerks.

SC/19 **URGENT BUSINESS**

The Monitoring Officer updated the Committee on recently received standards complaints: there were two that she and the Chairman of the Committee were looking into; and an informal complaint regarding councillor behaviour towards an officer had just been received.

The meeting closed at 10.50 am having commenced at 10.00 am

CHAIRMAN