

Standards Committee
16 MARCH 2016

Present: Councillors: David Coldwell (Vice-Chairman), Brian Donnelly, Mike Morgan, Godfrey Newman, Tricia Youtan, John Donaldson, Mary Jagger and Val Court

Apologies: Councillors: Ian Howard, Brian O'Connell and Kieran Diamond

Also Present: Councillors: Peter Burgess and Christian Mitchell

SC/20 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2nd December 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SC/21 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

SC/22 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

SC/23 **EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHANGES TO THE STANDARDS (AND ASSOCIATED) FUNCTION**

The Monitoring Officer reminded Members that when the current Standards Regime had been adopted in May 2014, Council had resolved that the regime would be reviewed during the current municipal year. At the meeting in December the Committee had agreed that the review should be carried out by the Monitoring Officer and his staff, with contributions from Members of the Committee.

The review had looked at the current function with particular regard to the changes that had been made regarding complaints about councillor behaviour: the removal of the internal right of review for a complainant; the removal of the right of appeal for the subject member; and the delegation of power to the Monitoring Officer, with the discretion to refer to a Standards Sub-Committee.

Members considered the outcome of the review and were satisfied that the current Standards Regime functioned well and no material changes were required.

RESOLVED

That the outcome of the review of the Standards function be noted.

REASON

To enable the Standards Committee to note that it has satisfied the Council resolution of May 2014 (CO97 refers) that a review of the Standards regime at Horsham District Council be undertaken after the local elections in May 2015.

SC/24 **THE 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.

Training and awareness: As part of the ongoing Induction Programme for Members, Ethical Governance training had taken place on 10th March. Members expressed disappointment at the low attendance rate at training sessions and discussed the need to encourage more Councillors to attend. It was noted that whilst it was good practice to attend training, in particular for Safeguarding and Ethical Governance, there was no legal requirement to do so.

The Monitoring Officer had arranged for Parish Councillors and Clerks to attend similar Ethical Governance training on 21st April at Parkside. Further training sessions for Parish Councillors and Clerks would be offered in a location outside Horsham to encourage those from around the District to attend. The role of Parish Clerks in supporting their Councillors was discussed, and the Monitoring Officer would raise the need for training with Clerks next month. It was noted that SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) training was available to Parish Clerks.

Local assessment, other action, investigations and determinations: The Monitoring Officer advised that there had been a sharp rise in the number of complaints against Parish Councillors. Several of the cases were interrelated and the increase was considered to be an anomalous situation.

Register of Interests: Members discussed the current Register of Interest form, which the Monitoring Officer was to review.

It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would produce two draft forms for the Standards Committee to consider at their next meeting: one version would be simplified and shortened; the other would be more comprehensive.

Work Programme update: The list was noted.

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

The meeting closed at 10.47 am having commenced at 10.00 am

CHAIRMAN