

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

2nd December 2015

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

Advisory members

Present: Parish Council Representatives: Val Court
Independent Persons: John Donaldson, Mary Jagger

Apologies: Councillors: Brian Donnelly, Brian O'Connell, Tricia Youtan
Parish Council Representatives: Kieran Diamond

SC/14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16th September 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SC/15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SC/16 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements

SC/17 **ASSESSMENT 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.

The review would look 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.

The review would also look at other aspects of the current function including: the requirements regarding the declaration of interests at meetings outlined in the Code of Members' Conduct; the Council's Dispensation Scheme and dual hatted Members; and the role of Independent Persons and Parish Council Representatives.

SC/17 Assessment of the Effectiveness of Changes to the Standards (and associated) Function (Cont.)

Members discussed the suggested review methodologies as set out in the report and concluded that the review should be undertaken by officers, with input from members of the Committee, who would submit their responses to the Review Criteria questions set out in Appendix Two of the report and any other comments on the current Standards function.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the options for the review methodology by which the review will proceed be noted.
- (ii) That the Monitoring Officer and his staff undertake the review and report to the Committee, as specified in option (b).
- (iii) That Members of the Committee contribute to the review by submitting their comments to the Monitoring Officer, including responses to the Review Criteria questions as set out in Appendix Two of the report.

SC/18 **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: As part of the ongoing Induction Programme announced following the Election in May 2015, further training sessions for Members had been arranged. Ethical Governance training would take place on 3 February 2016, followed by Equality & Diversity training on 20 January and Media & Communications training on 23 February. These sessions would be open to all Standards Committee members.
- Local assessment, other action, investigations and determinations: The Committee noted the two assessments of complaints received relating to Parish Councillors, which had been carried out by the Monitoring Officer since September 2015. Members noted that the wording of the last sentence of the description of the Nature of Complaint on Case CES112, as printed in Appendix Two of the report, was incorrect and should have read 'In any event the Monitoring Officer found there was no evidence that the Subject Member had not acted contrary to the principles of objectivity and selflessness'.

Two further complaints had been received, which were currently being considered.

SC/18 Ethical Framework Update (Cont.)

- Register of Interests: The Monitoring Officer had reviewed the Register of Interest forms and minor amendments had been made, in particular to the sponsorship section.
- Work Programme update: The list was noted.
- Case summaries: Members noted the case from Shropshire Council regarding a breach of its code of conduct, 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.
- (ii) To promote and maintain high standards of conduct amongst Members.

SC/19 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN UPDATE 2015 – 2016**

The Customer Services Manager reported on the number and nature of complaints about the Council made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). The number received since April 2014 was less than the number received during the same period the previous year. Since the last LGO update to the Committee in March 2015 there had been four complaints about HDC to the LGO. None of them had been upheld.

RESOLVED

That the contents of 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 complaints 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.

The meeting finished at 10.24am having commenced at 10.00am.

CHAIRMAN