

Standards Committee
25 NOVEMBER 2020

Present: Councillors: Brian Donnelly (Chairman), Diana van der Klugt (Vice-Chairman), Karen Burgess, Peter Burgess, Jim Sanson, Philip Baxter and John Donaldson

Apologies: Councillors: Alan Britten and Godfrey Newman
Absent: Councillors: Alan Britten

SC/17 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 September were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

SC/18 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

SC/19 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

SC/20 **STANDARDS UPDATE**

Local assessment and investigations to include progress on Steyning Parish Council

The Monitoring Officer updated the Committee on progress since the resolution at the previous meeting relating to Steyning Parish Council (SPC) and the need to resolve the problem of persistent complaints through training or mediation. SPC were willing to engage and had held a full Parish Council meeting focussed on behaviours. They had resolved to hold a number of smaller meetings to seek solutions, and the Monitoring Officer and members of her team would be involved. The Monitoring officer and Legal Services Business Manager had also met with the SPC Clerks and have been invited to their next full Parish Council meeting.

The Committee noted the outstanding complaints as printed in the report. The Legal Services Business Manager advised that since publication of the report a further three formal complaints had been received, two of which related to SPC.

It was noted that there were four outstanding cases that would be considered by a Standards Sub-Committee early next year.

Update on the Appointment of Independent Person

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that, after conducting a number of interviews, the recruitment of a second Independent Person had been successful and the appointment was about to be made.

Update on the Appointment of Parish Representative

The Monitoring Officer reminded the Committee that Horsham Association of Local Councils (HALC) were receiving nominations for a second Parish Representative. These would be considered by HALC at a meeting in December and forwarded with their recommendations to the Monitoring Officer.

Update on the Model Code of Conduct

The Monitoring Officer advised that publication of the new Model Code of Conduct, which had been delayed because of the pandemic, was expected shortly. Once available the new Code would need to be adopted; it would be best practice to use the new Code to bring consistency across local authorities and parishes.

The Chairman expressed concern that the new Code would still lack sufficient sanctions to deter breaches of the Code, and the Committee's current lack of teeth would continue. The Committee discussed the possibility of publishing Decision Notices where a breach had occurred so that the name of the Councillor would be in the public domain. Members discussed this proposal in the context of the existing protocol and the ICO's advice that naming individuals who had breached the Code of Conduct was in the public interest.

RESOLVED

The Committee agreed that the Monitoring Officer bring a report to the Standards Committee detailing the implications of publishing Decision Notices.

If the Committee is in agreement, a recommendation can then be taken to Council to adopt the policy of publicly naming elected Members who breach the Code.

The Chairman suggested that an additional Standards Committee could be arranged, if required, to enable the recommendation to go to Council at the earliest opportunity.

The meeting closed at 11.10 am having commenced at 10.00 am

CHAIRMAN