

Standards Committee
14 SEPTEMBER 2016

Present: Councillors: Tricia Youtan (Chairman), David Coldwell (Vice-Chairman), Mike Morgan, Godfrey Newman

John Donaldson, Mary Jagger and Val Court

Apologies: Councillors: Brian Donnelly, Christian Mitchell
Kieran Diamond

SC/7 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8th June 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SC/8 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

SC/9 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

SC/10 **MINUTES OF THE LOCAL ASSESSMENT SUB-COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the meeting of the Local Assessment Sub-Committee held on 8th June 2016 were received.

SC/11 **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: Training for Parish Councillors in Steyning had taken place in August, where the Monitoring Officer had given a presentation on the importance of Ethical Governance and the Code of Conduct, in particular with regard to members' interests. Parish Councillors attending the training said that it had been very useful. The Monitoring Officer anticipated offering this training to other Parish Councils. It was noted that quarterly training for Parish Clerks was already organised by the District Council, and that Parish Councils were in a position to organise their own training.

Members discussed the annual report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, which had recently been published and noted that the number of vexatious complaints had reduced since the new standards regime had been introduced by the Localism Act, and that the role of Independent Persons was generally very well received.

The report had also found that the effectiveness of sanctions available was still a concern. The Committee echoed this concern and discussed the possibility of lobbying the government to bring back some sanctions that had been available before the Localism Act, in particular the authority to suspend a Councillor.

- It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would bring a report to the next meeting of the Committee detailing sanctions that had been available before the Localism Act and recommending how best the Committee could lobby the government.

Local assessment, other action, investigations and determinations: Members noted that the spike in the number of complaints received earlier in the year had come to an end, with only two received since the beginning of April, one of which had been withdrawn.

Members noted a recent case that had been reported in the press regarding an ex-Councillor from Derby City Council who had been imprisoned for two months after pleading guilty to giving a false address to an Electoral Registration Officer.

Members of the Committee acknowledged the amount of work that officers undertook in compiling cases for assessment by the Local Assessment Sub Committee, and the Monitoring Officer thanked Committee Members for undertaking all the additional work that these cases brought.

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/12 **COUNCILLOR IAN HOWARD**

The Chairman of the Committee closed the meeting by paying tribute to Councillor Ian Howard, who had passed away on the 30th August, saying that he was a moral and upstanding Councillor who would be sorely missed.

The meeting closed at 10.30 am having commenced at 10.00 am

CHAIRMAN