

Standards Committee
27 SEPTEMBER 2017

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

Apologies: Councillors: Roy Cornell and Michael Willett

SC/9 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED

That Councillor David Coldwell be elected Chairman of the Committee for the rest of the Council year.

SC/10 **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN (IF REQUIRED)**

RESOLVED

That Councillor Mike Morgan be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the rest of the Council year.

SC/11 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7 June 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SC/12 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

SC/13 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

SC/14 **THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN UPDATE 2016-2017**

The Customer Services Feedback Officer reported on the number, nature and outcomes of complaints about the Council made to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) in 2016/17. The Local Government Ombudsman had been renamed earlier this year to reflect its full remit.

In 2016/17 there had been a total of 14 complaints. Six had been closed without investigation, five had been referred back to the Council for local resolution, two had been upheld, and one not upheld.

Members noted details of the two complaints which had been upheld, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, and were advised that the cases had been reviewed by the Feedback Officer and relevant Service Managers.

Members welcomed the report and considered that the small number of complaints reflected well on the quality of service supplied by the Council.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted.

REASONS

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. In addition the Council uses its complaints process to improve services delivery.

SC/15 **THE ETHICAL FRAMEWORK UPDATE**

The Monitoring Officer presented the report which provided information on work that had been undertaken on Standards matters.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer had attended the Parish Clerks Quarterly meeting, which had taken place in Southwater in early September, and spoken on standards matters. Parish Clerks were advised to remind their Councillors to keep their Register of Interests forms up to date on Parish websites, and to ensure all information regarding disclosable pecuniary interests were included.

The Monitoring Officer advised that, since publication of the report, the DCLG had begun a consultation on proposals to update the criteria that prohibits individuals from becoming or being a Councillor or directly-elected Mayor, which would run until 8 December 2017. The scope of the Consultation is limited, however it could be an opportunity for local authorities to put forward their opinions on the current system, under the Localism Act 2011, and lobby for additional powers of sanction. Members agreed that the Committee would respond to the consultation after the next meeting of the Committee on 29 November.

- It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would bring a report to the next meeting of the Committee regarding the government's consultation on updating the disqualification criteria for individuals becoming or being a Councillor.

- Further it was noted that The Committee on Standards in Public Life had announced in its Forward Plan for 2017/2018 that it intends to undertake a review of local government standards during 2017 and 2018.

Members discussed the importance of Standards training for Councillors. All Members had been offered training after the local elections in 2015. The Monitoring Officer would review what training had been given and look into the possibility of refresher training for Members and also for Parish Councillors. It was noted that HALC (Horsham Association of Local Councils) offered training at a Parish level, and training had also been given at a number of Parish Councils by the Monitoring and Deputy Monitoring Officer.

The list of Code of Conduct complaints, as set out in Appendix 1, was noted. The Chairman of the Committee suggested that the current process for dealing with local assessments should be reviewed, and he would look into this before the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the matters set out in 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/16 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 10.24 am having commenced at 9.30 am

CHAIRMAN