

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24 JULY 2014**

#### **I N D E X**

<b>Page No</b>	<b>Minute No</b>	<b>Heading</b>
1	162	Apologies for Absence
1	163	Declaration of Interests
1	164	Minutes of Last Meeting
1	165	Change of Order of Agenda
2	166	Standards Committee Survey: Overview Report
3	167	Outcome of Election for Co-opted member
4	168	Complaints Update
4	169	Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2013/2014
5	170	Work Programme 2014/2015
5	171	Urgent Business – Public Session

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24 JULY 2014**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Mrs J Austen - Chair

Councillor G Baxter MBE

“ G Butler

“ S J Ellis

“ S Peters

Councillor T Reader

“ Mrs C A Smith

“ M E Thacker

#### **Parish/Town Council Representatives**

Councillor E Mansbridge

“ D Ruff

#### **Also Present:**

Matthew Kane – Deputy Monitoring Officer

Frazer Powell – Senior Governance Officer

Sarah Sternberg – Assistant Director Governance and Monitoring  
Officer

Debbie Whitehead – Consultation and Community Involvement  
Co-ordinator

#### **162 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies submitted for absence from the meeting.

#### **163 Declarations of Interest**

Members were requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or other interests, not already on their register of interests, in any item on the agenda and withdraw from the meeting at the appropriate time.

There were no declarations of interests by Members at this meeting.

#### **164 Minutes of Last Meeting**

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 28 May 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **165 Change of Order of Agenda**

The Chair with the consent of the Committee agreed to bring forward consideration of the Standards Survey: Overview Report as the next item of business.

**166 Standards Committee Survey: Overview Report**

The Committee considered Report No ADCSI/2/14/JF/DW of the Assistant Director – Customer Services and Improvement. The purpose of the report was to set out the results from the four Ethical Standards surveys conducted between February and May 2014. The Committee also considered a presentation from the Consultation and Community Involvement Co-ordinator on the survey results

The Standards Committee had requested that work be undertaken on what standards of conduct were being observed and to identify areas where further awareness/development may be required across four groups: District Council officers, District Councillors, Parish/Town Councillors and Parish Clerks. A questionnaire had been sent to each of the above groups. The questionnaires were broadly similar in content, but did include adjustments relevant to each of the different groups. The questionnaire was made available in both paper and electronically via the Survey Monkey system, a link was available and publicised via NEDi.

A summary of the survey information in the report and presentation was as follows:

- For District Council officers, the total number of surveys circulated was 482, 102 completed questionnaires were received – a response rate of 21.2%;
- Fifty two copies of the survey questionnaires were circulated to District Councillors, 23 were received back – a response rate of 44.2%;
- 254 survey questionnaires were sent to Parish/Town Councillors, 70 were returned – a response rate of 27.6%;
- 24 survey questionnaires were sent to Parish Clerks, 11 were returned – a response rate of 45%.

The report contained the following appendices:

- Data Table (Appendix A)
- Comparison Tables (Appendix B)
- Analysis of open comments (Appendix C)
- Demographic profiles (Appendix D)

During the Committee's consideration of the four Ethical Standards survey results the following matters were raised:-

- Training issues had been highlighted by officers in terms of Ethical Standards;
- The Derbyshire Association of Local Councils (DALC) provides training for Parish Clerks;
- There were a number of questions raised which related to issues of perception, these were not fundamental issues for the District Council;
- The response rate for the four questionnaires was typical for surveys of this type;

- The next report to Committee in respect of the detailed analysis of District Councillors and officers should set out the issues which needed to be addressed and also propose mechanisms to address those issues.

**RESOLVED** – That the content of the Ethical Standards Survey Results 2014 Report be noted.

(Consultation and Community Involvement Co-ordinator/  
Assistant Director – Governance and Monitoring Officer)

#### **167 Outcome of Election of Co-opted Member**

The Committee considered Report No ADGMO/19/14/SS/MK of the Assistant Director Governance and Monitoring Officer. The purpose of the report was to advise the Committee of the result from the Parish / Town Council ballot for a non-voting co-opted member to the Standards Committee.

Committee was reminded that following the resignation of Councillor D Speed an election had been held for one of the Committee's co-opted members from the Parish/Town Councils in the District. The election had been coordinated by the Council rather than by the Derbyshire Association of Local Councils.

Two nominations were received, the Parish/Town Councils were advised of the two nominations and requested to specify their preference from the two candidates available. A total of 17 of the 24 Parish/Town Councils voted (a 70.8% turnout). Councillor E Mansbridge of Clay Cross Parish Council won the election with the support of nine of the Parish/Town Councils. Councillor William Armitage of Ashover Parish Council received eight votes.

The Chair, Councillor J Austen, on behalf of the Committee welcomed Councillor E Mansbridge to his first meeting of the Standards Committee.

**RESOLVED** –

- (1) That the Committee notes the election of Councillor E Mansbridge following the ballot of Parish/Town Councils in respect of their nomination of a non voting co-opted member for the Standards Committee.
- (2) That the Committee notes that Councillor E Mansbridge's term of office is until May 2015.

(Assistant Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer)

#### **168 Complaints Update**

The Committee considered Report No ADGMO/20/14/SS/MK of the Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer. The purpose of the report was to advise Members of the number of complaints received this year relating to allegations of breaches of the Members Code of Conduct. The Council had to date received one complaint that a District/Parish/Town Councillor had breached the Members' Code of

Conduct. Following consultation with one of the Council's Independent Persons this matter had been referred to another organisation as the allegation did not fall within the Members' Code of Conduct.

Of the four complaints from 2013/2014 one complaint was still subject to an investigation which was intended to be resolved in the near future. Members were reminded that the Committee had requested previously a detailed breakdown of complaints received once they had all been resolved. This information would be provided once the existing investigations had been concluded.

**RESOLVED** – That the Complaints Update Report be noted.

(Assistant Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer)

**169 Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2013/14**

The Committee considered Report No ADGMO/21/14/SS/MK of the Assistant Director – Governance and Monitoring Officer. The purpose of the report was to advise Members of the end of year statistics for the District Council in respect of complaints dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Local Government Ombudsman provided an independent arbitration service for complaints against local authorities once those Council's internal complaints framework had been completed. The appendix to the report was the Annual Review Letter from the Local Government's Ombudsman. The Ombudsman had received 13 complaints relating to the District Council in 2013/14, this was a slight increase on the previous year's figure of 11 but still indicated good performance when compared with similar sized councils in Derbyshire.

The Committee was reminded that complaints relating to the Council's role as a social landlord had transferred to the Local Government Housing Ombudsman in 2013. To date the Local Government Housing Ombudsman had not advised the Council or Rykneld Homes Limited of any complaints it had received.

In terms of the complaint submitted to the Ombudsman in 2013/2014 no cases of maladministration were found against the Council, one complaint was upheld.

During the Committee's consideration of the report the following question was asked:

- There was no statistical information detailed in Table 1 of the report in respect of figures for Derbyshire Dales District Council.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer in response to this question advised that he would look into the question raised by the Member.

**RESOLVED** – That the report on the Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2013/2014 be noted.

(Assistant Director – Governance and Monitoring Officer)

**170 Work Programme 2014/2015**

The Committee considered Report No ADGMO/22/14/MK/SS of the Assistant Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer. The purpose of the report was to advise Members of progress on its Work Programme 2014/2015. A copy of the Work Programme is attached as **Appendix A** to these minutes.

The Committee's Work Programme 2014/2015 was based on its functions scheme as approved by Council, the Programme was a live document and would be subject to amendments as the work progressed.

**RESOLVED** – That the content of the Committee's Work Programme 2014/2015 as detailed in Appendix A to these minutes be noted.

(Governance Team)

**171 Urgent Business – Public Session**

The Committee noted that there was no urgent business to be discussed in the public session of this meeting of the Standards Committee.

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STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15		
Meeting date	Item	Comments
28 May 2014	Transparency International Report on Corruption in Local Government  Whistle-blowing Policy  Work Programme	To recommend the policy to Cabinet
24 July 2014	Outcome of Election for Co-opted Member  Standards Survey  Local Government Ombudsman  Complaints Update  Work Programme	Presentation from the Consultation and Community Involvement Officer  2013/14 statistics for consideration
18 September 2014	Review of Constitution  Detailed Report on Standards Survey – District Council Response  Work Programme	As requested by Committee in May 2014
27 November 2014	Complaints Update	

	Detailed Report on Standards Survey – Parish Council Response  Work Programme	As requested by Committee in May 2014
29 January 2015	Gifts and Hospitality Update  RIPA Policy update  Work Programme	Details of gifts and hospitality received by members and officers in 2014
26 March 2015	Standards Committee Annual Report including feedback from Independent Persons  Review of Independent Person role  Outcomes from Committee on Standards in Public Life Survey  Complaints Update  Work Programme	As requested by Committee in May 2014  Dependent on receipt of results.