

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 11 JULY 2019

Present:

Councillor William Armitage (Chair)

Councillor Pat Antcliff
Councillor Carolyn Renwick
Councillor Michael Roe
Councillor Ross Shipman

Councillor Pat Kerry
Councillor Jacqueline Ridgway
Councillor Kathy Rouse

Also Present:

102 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Ruff.

103 Declarations of Interest

Members are 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 interests declared at the meeting.

104 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 11 March 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

105 Role of Standards Committee and Work Undertaken To-date

Members received a briefing from the Deputy Monitoring Officer and Governance Manager in relation to the role of the Standards Committee and the work that the Committee had undertaken during the previous municipal year.

Circulated at the meeting was a full outline of the Terms of Reference for the Committee, including their functions as set out within the Constitution. Detail and advice was offered on each area, however, specific training on areas such as RIPA and the Whistleblowing Policy would be given prior to considering those annual reports during the forthcoming municipal year.

In considering the Terms of Reference of the Committee it was highlighted that new Members may be unaware of their responsibilities in regard to gifts and

hospitality and the Deputy Monitoring Officer undertook to provide a note of advice to all members of Council.

The Governance Manager briefed the Committee on the recent review undertaken by the Parliamentary Committee on Standards in Public Life into Local Government Ethical Standards.

Members noted that the previous Standards Committee were consulted, alongside all interested stakeholders, in regard to the Terms of Reference for the review and recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee were published in January 2019. The full report presented to Standards Committee in May 2019 made a number of recommendations, which included:-

- The criminal offence for non registration and non declaration of disclosable pecuniary interests should be abolished.
- Council should have the power to suspend Members for up to six months without allowances.
- Independent Persons should be given a legal indemnity by Councils if they were to have a role in agreeing the suspension of Members.
- Independent Persons should be appointed for a two year term, renewable once.
- Statutory protection for Monitoring Officers should be standard to include any disciplinary action, not just dismissal.
- Parish Clerks should hold a suitable qualification.
- There should be greater recognition of the role of the Monitoring Officer in supporting Parishes and resources should be allocated accordingly.

Members gave consideration to support provided to Parish Councils and the Monitoring Officer and noted that the previous Standards Committee had requested that this item be brought back for a full discussion at a future meeting.

It was noted that a number of the findings of the report could not be actioned without changes in legislation, however, there were one or two recommendations that could be incorporated into the review of the Terms of Reference and these would be discussed at the following meeting.

RESOLVED – That the role of the Standards Committee be noted and the Terms of Reference be revised for consideration at the next meeting.

106 Review of the Council's Constitution

Members gave consideration to the list of areas for review within the Council's Constitution for consideration by the Standards Committee prior to submission as part of the annual review of the Constitution to Council for adoption.

The Governance Manager explained that one of the primary functions of the Standards Committee was to undertake an annual review of the Council's Constitution to ensure that it was up-to-date and in line with legislation and current circumstances. Members noted that the following areas had been identified for review:-

- JCG Terms of Reference
- Contract Procedure Rules – Contract Formalities
- Standards Committee Terms of Reference
- Review of Employee Code of Conduct
- Employment Rules
- JEAC Terms of Reference
- Questions and Motions to Council (limitations)
- Delegation Scheme (MO Delegations)
- Minor wording changes or updating of job titles (housekeeping)

Members of the Standards Committee were satisfied that the list set out above was comprehensive and noted that additions and alterations could be made during the municipal year.

RESOLVED – That the list of areas of the Constitution to be reviewed in the forthcoming municipal year be agreed.

107 Draft Standards Committee Annual Report

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the Standards Committee Annual Report 2018/19 to the Committee drafted on behalf of the former Chair of the Standards Committee, Brian Ridgway.

The Annual Report outlined the work of the Standards Committee during the previous municipal year and covered the following areas. Complaints received during 2018/19:-

- Complaints received during 2018/19
- Reports of the Independent Persons
- Local Government Ombudsman Complaints 2017/18
- Ethical Standards Training
- Policy and Constitution Review Work
- Guidance and reports considered by the Committee
- Consultations and survey results relating to Standards

The Deputy Monitoring Officer also took the opportunity to discuss in detail the areas of work to be undertaken by the Standards Committee on an annual basis and offered Members the opportunity to ask questions or request further details of training on different areas.

RESOLVED – That the Annual Report of the Standards Committee be agreed for submission to Council.

108 Complaints Against Members Update

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that at the conclusion of the 2018/19 municipal year all complaints had reached resolution. She further advised that since the commencement of the 2019/20 municipal year two complaints had been received, however, they were in their infancy and there was no information to share with Members at this time.

RESOLVED – That the update on Member Complaints be noted.

109 Urgent Items of Business

Members were advised that there was no urgent business to be discussed in the public session at this meeting of the Standards Committee. The Committee discussed the timing of future meetings and agreed, where possible, meetings would be held at 2.00 pm on the dates specified in the meeting schedule.
