

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

NOTES OF INFORMAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 30 JANUARY 2024

Present:

Councillor Kevin Gillott (Chair) (in the Chair)

Councillor Pat Kerry
Councillor Kathy Rouse

Councillor Fran Petersen

Also Present:

S Sternberg Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer
A Maher Governance Manager
A Bond Governance Officer

STA/ Apologies for Absence

25/2

3-24 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Antcliff, C Cupit and H Wetherall.

STA/ Minutes of Last Meeting

26/2

3-24 RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 27 September and the Notes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 15 November 2023 be noted.

STA/ Review of the Constitution - Next Steps

27/2

3-24 Committee were presented with a working document that highlighted typographical changes that had been made to the Council's Constitution. Committee considered that in future Officers should make these changes without the need to wait for approval from Committee. They heard that the Monitoring Officer had a delegation to this effect and would take the proposed approach going forward.

Members heard that the Constitution was currently divided into 29 sections. Officers had suggested that the Constitution could be split into two parts: Part One the Role of the Constitution and Part Two Technical Provisions supporting how Councillors and Officers work. Officers had attempted to identify what should form the core of the Constitution with additional documents and areas being treated as Constitutional Documents.

Committee considered that it would be worthwhile to have a core Constitution document separate from the appendices or Constitutional Documents as this would offer greater accessibility to Members.

Members heard that a further document could be created in order to make the Constitution more accessible to the wider public. This would be a concise, separate and simple document that would explain the role of the Council and

Councillors. This document could form the basis of a social media campaign or a further campaign aimed at targeting younger members of the public.

Committee considered that a common simple and accessible document could be worthwhile and heard that the Monitoring Officer would provide a document to the next meeting of Committee that would form the basis of this. Members also considered that there was a need to increase engagement with younger residents but that a wider social media campaign or public documents would not be a worthwhile use of resources.

Members discussed additional proposed changes to the Constitution. They asked for further information to be provided to them on the levels of the financial part of key decisions such as what has influenced this level and if any increase would be required due to factors such as inflation.

Committee agreed that the HOPS should be allowed to appoint on a higher point in the pay scale where the market is such that any appointment is difficult to achieve or for other good reason but that the Leader of the Council should be notified prior to this decision being taken.

Group agreed that the Monitoring Officer should be able to make or revoke appointments to outside bodies and make changes to the membership of Committees and Sub Committees following consultation with the relevant party Leader, the Leader and/or Deputy Leader of Council and the relevant Portfolio Holder. Group considered that after a change had been made, all Group leaders should be notified of the change.

Members considered that an Independent Remuneration Panel should be established to review the Members Allowance Scheme and that the same panel should also conduct a review at Rykneld Homes Ltd.

Committee discussed the procedure rules for meetings and considered that meetings of Full Council should be limited to a maximum duration of three hours with the option to extend the meeting following a vote to that effect.

Members drew attention to questions from the public and considered that a definition of who the public were should be included in the Constitution. It was agreed that the public, for these purposes, should be defined as electors, non domestic rate payers, 16/17 year olds who lived in the District and tax payers.

Members requested that the Monitoring Officer explore the possibility of limiting the wording of questions from members of the public at meetings of Council.

Committee considered Motions at meetings of Full Council and agreed that the Monitoring Officer should have the power to prevent any Motion that does not meet the correct criteria from being placed on the Agenda. Members also considered that when a Member seconds a Motion they should not be able to reserve their right to speak unless this is permitted by the Chair.

Members discussed rules at Planning Committee and asked the Monitoring Officer to investigate whether it was right and proper for full Council to be the

parent body for planning matters and what, if any, processes should be in place. They also asked that the Officer explore whether a Cabinet Member should sit on Planning Committee and what the planning and practical consequences would be of excluding people.

Committee considered that there were three grounds for dispensations that should be delegated to the Monitoring Officer. These were:

1. That, without the dispensation, the representation of different political groups on the body transacting the business would be so unbalanced as to alter the likely outcome of any vote on the matter.
2. That, without a dispensation, no member of the Cabinet would be able to participate in the matter.
3. That, so many members of the decision-making body have disclosable pecuniary interests in a matter that it would impede the transaction of the business.