

Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on Monday, 12 February 2018 in Committee Rooms 1 & 2 - Deanes, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council at 6.30 pm

Members of the Standards Committee in attendance: Mr P Moore OBE (Chair), Councillor L Agnew, Councillor L Fryer, Mrs E Morris, Councillor S Parker, Councillor D Putty and Councillor M Westbrook

1/17 Apologies for absence and substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Councillor J Slimin

2/17 Appointment of Vice-Chair

Councillor D Putty was appointed as Vice-Chair for the 2017/18 municipal year.

3/17 Declarations of interest

The Democratic Services Officer advised the committee that the Head of Law and Governance had declared a personal interest on Item 8 of the agenda – Revised Employment Procedure Rules for Senior Statutory Officers - Role of Independent Persons and would leave the room for the item.

4/17 Urgent matters

There were no urgent items.

5/17 Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd November 2016

The [Minutes](#) of the meeting held on 23rd November 2016 were confirmed by the committee as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6/17 Advice Guidance and Training on the Code of Conduct

The Interim Legal Services Manager introduced the report which asked the committee to consider advice, guidance and training on the code of conduct and set out the role of the Standards Committee in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members.

Councillors proposed that opportunities for training and development be extended to Parish Councillors and considered options to strengthen elements of training including dealing with vulnerable people, lone working and data protection.

The committee asked questions and sought clarification on issues raised within the report, including a request that steps were taken to ensure councillors elected at by-elections received the same level of support and training as those elected by thirds.

Officers agreed that training for Parish Councillors could be included and supported committee members views on the importance of training and development and sought support from political group leaders.

The committee agreed that, to increase the profile of the Standards Committee, the Chair would attend the training session on the Code of Conduct to introduce the committee and its work.

There was no consensus over the use of online training with some members supporting its use as a way of reaching a number of parish councillors while other members questioned its effectiveness.

Resolved: The Standards Committee

1. Note its role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members by providing advice, guidance and training on the code of conduct
2. Agree to conduct an on line survey of members to seek views on the content and delivery of standards and ethics training
3. Agree the proposed new approach set out in the report to provide advice guidance and training for councillors on the requirements of the Code of Conduct without making such training mandatory

7/17 **Member Complaints 2017/18**

The Interim Legal Services Manager introduced the report which provided an update on the handling of complaints against Councillors to keep the committee informed of issues of probity in the council.

Officers informed the committee that further analysis would be provided in a more detailed report to be submitted in the new municipal year as part of a re-established routine of submissions.

The committee requested that for future reports complaints against Parish Councillors and Borough Councillors were shown separately, giving further information on the types of complaint.

Officers agreed that further information could be included in future reports, including details of complaints once they were concluded and set out a plan for including anonymised details of complaints in progress with suitable redactions so as not to pre-determine any outcome, giving a broad indication on the nature of the complaint.

Officers also set out a proposal to increase the frequency of Standards Committee meetings to ensure the committee met at least quarterly to facilitate reporting in line with established cycles within the authority which the Chair agreed to consider as part of the work programme item.

In response to a request from borough councillors, officers agreed to circulate the risk assessment which had been completed as part of the report.

Resolved: The Standards Committee note the report

8/17 **Call for Evidence from the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL)**

The Interim Legal Services Manager gave a verbal update to the committee on the call for evidence from the Committee on Standards in Public Life as part of it's review into local government ethical standards.

The committee agreed to establish a working party to consider submitting a reply to the call for evidence, with any reply provided to the committee for information at it's meeting in June 2018.

Officers agreed to circulate the consultation documents to parish and borough Councillors asking individuals to liaise through their relevant representative to ensure a broad representation of views are considered, ensuring all members felt able to contribute.

Resolved: That P Moore, Councillor M Westbrook, E Morris and Parish Councillor L Agnew be appointed to a working party, meeting in March to consider a reply to the call for evidence from the Committee on Standards in Public Life as part of it's review into local government ethical standards

9/17 **Annual Report 2016/17**

The Interim Legal Services Manager introduced the report which set out the role of the Standards Committee in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members.

Officers advised committee members that further information would be provided in future versions of the annual report and agreed to add to the committees work plan a consideration of the committee's proportionality.

Officers proposed that the Annual reporting period now run from May to May which was supported by the committee.

Resolved: That the Standards Committee:

1. Agree the draft Annual Report 2016/17 set out at Appendix 1 of the report, and
2. Request officers to review the reporting cycle of Annual Reports so that the cycle is in line with the municipal year

10/17 **Standards Committee Work Plan 2018/19**

The Interim Legal Services Manager introduced the report which asked the committee to agree it's work programme for 2018/19 in light of it's terms of reference and any other considerations

Committee members sought clarification of some elements of the work plan, including the Review of Dispensations procedures and discussed current practice in relation to the granting of dispensations.

The Chair advised the committee:

- Of his support for regular meetings under the proposed work plan, and;
- That he had written to group leaders to seek suggestions for any additional work programme items

Resolved: That the Standards Committee:

1. Note its Terms of Reference
2. Note and agree the programme of meetings for 2018/19
3. Consider and agree its Work Programme for 2018/19
4. Request the Head of Law and Governance to review the timetable of meetings to consider the proposal to increase the frequency of Standards Committee meetings to ensure the committee meet at least quarterly to facilitate reporting in line with established cycles within the authority.

11/17 **Revised Employment Procedure Rules for Senior Statutory Officers - Role of Independent Persons**

The Interim Legal Services Manager introduced the report which explained new rules adopted by the Council which required Independent Persons appointed under the Localism Act to support the Standards Committee to take on additional responsibilities.

Committee members considered the options for increasing the numbers of Independent Persons, though members felt that current arrangements with three Independent Persons had worked well.

Officers agreed that consideration could be given to recruiting additional Independent Persons.

Parish Councillor L Fryer left the meeting following debate on the item.

Resolved: That the Standards Committee note:

1. The Council will be establishing new arrangements as set out in the report to deal with disciplinary matters relating to relevant senior officers.
2. These arrangements will include an Independent Panel comprising at least two people appointed under section 28 Localism Act 2011 to advise Council.

Recommendation to Full Council:

1. To reappoint Sian Campbell as Independent Person under section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 for a new two year term of office expiring in February 2020; and

2. That Council is recommended to reappoint Keith Bastin and Chris Evans as Independent Standards Assessors for a new two year term of office expiring in February 2020.

The meeting ended at 7.48 pm.

Chairman