

Standards Committee – 14 April 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **14 April 2016** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr D Merrick
Vice-Chairman: Cllr R R Dray

Cllr Mrs C M Mason

Cllr M J Steptoe

INDEPENDENT PERSONS (INVITEES NON-VOTING)

Mr M G Drage
Mr S Shadbolt
Mrs L Walker

PARISH MEMBERS (CO-OPTED NON-VOTING)

Cllr P A Beckers
Cllr Mrs D A Constable
Cllr Mrs L A Vingoe

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr G J Ioannou.

OFFICERS PRESENT

J Bostock - Assistant Director – Democratic Services
M Power - Committee Administrator

83 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

84 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr M J Steptoe declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 5 of the Agenda, Member Learning and Development 2016/17, by virtue of being the Chairman of Barling Magna Parish Council. Cllr R R Dray also declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 5, by virtue of being a Member of Rayleigh Town Council.

85 MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT 2016/17

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director – Democratic Services on the proposals for the Member Learning and Development Programme for 2016/17.

During discussion, the following was raised:

- At the last meeting of the Committee Members had expressed concern at the low number of attendees from Parish/Town Councils at District Council training sessions and had discussed how Parish/Town Councils could be encouraged to participate more fully in these training sessions. In respect of the planning training on 9 March 2016 that had been specifically designed for Parish/Town Councils and delivered by the Assistant Director – Planning, only four of the 14 Parish/Town Councils had attended. (It was noted that there had been very good feedback from this planning training session from those Parish Councils who attended.) Members discussed the possibility of establishing a minimum number of attendees for future planning training sessions; this would be considered further at the next meeting of the Committee.
- The reason for low attendance may be that some of the courses offered may not be relevant to Parish/Town Councillor roles and responsibilities. Cllr R R Dray, the District Council representative on the Rochford Hundred Association of Local Councils (RHALC), advised that he would raise the question of Parish/Town Councils engagement with District Council training at the next meeting of the RHALC on 21 April. (It was noted that The Essex Association of Local Councils provides training for Parish Councils.)
- Although there are only 13 Members on the Development Committee, other Members attended mandatory training sessions because of the requirement that Members wishing to substitute on the Committee have undertaken mandatory planning training. It was requested that the content of the training should also be examined to ensure it is appropriate for the needs of Committee Members.
- Members requested that the number of mandatory planning training sessions per year be reviewed. One suggestion was that the number offered be reduced from four to three per annum as it was felt that this would be sufficient to provide Members with a good knowledge of planning law/procedures and would have less impact on officer time. Consideration would need to be given to how many of the three sessions each Member or Substitute of the Committee would be required to attend.
- There was discussion on the option of offering morning training sessions as an alternative to afternoon and evening sessions and it was suggested that all Members be asked to comment on the time of day that they would prefer training to be held. Training could then be organised to meet the needs of the majority, where possible.
- On-line training could be available in conjunction with the ‘taught’ training currently offered.

Resolved

- (1) That the summary of Members' attendance at training sessions during the Municipal Year 2015/16, as set out in paragraph 2.1 of the officer report, be received.
- (2) That the proposals for the Member Learning and Development Programme for 2016/17, as set out in paragraphs 4.1 – 4.10 of the officer report, be endorsed.
- (3) That it be agreed in principle that, where appropriate, senior officers be invited to join Members in attending certain training sessions where this training has been requested in the course of a staff appraisal.
- (4) That the following be provided to the first meeting of the Standards Committee in the new Municipal Year:
 - (i) Information of the viability of reducing the number of mandatory planning training sessions from four to three per annum and how this would work in practice.
 - (ii) Feedback from Members on the time of day they would prefer training courses to be held.
 - (iii) Advice from officers on how the content, quality and appropriateness of the mandatory planning training sessions can be ensured.
 - (iv) How e-learning can be incorporated into the Member training programme.
 - (v) Possible reasons for low attendance by Parish/Town Councils at District Council training sessions and consideration as to whether a minimum number of attendees should be established for planning training sessions organised for Parish/Town Councils by the District Council.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

Chairman

Date

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