

Standards Committee – 4 October 2012

Minutes of the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **4 October 2012** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs M J Webster

Vice-Chairman: Cllr D Merrick

Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn

Cllr Mrs C M Mason

INDEPENDENT PERSONS (INVITEES NON-VOTING)

Mr D J Cottis
Mr M G Drage
Mr S Shadbolt
Mrs L Walker

PARISH MEMBER (CO-OPTED NON-VOTING)

Cllr Mrs D Constable

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from District Cllrs Mrs G A Lucas-Gill and I H Ward and Parish Cllrs P A Beckers and Mrs L A Vingoe.

OFFICERS PRESENT

A Bugeja - Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services/Monitoring Officer
M Power - Committee Administrator

201 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

202 PROTOCOL FOR INDEPENDENT PERSONS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services, which detailed a protocol for Independent Persons under the new Standards arrangements.

During discussion, the following was noted:-

- If a District or Parish Member seeks the view of an Independent Person on an allegation made against them, it may not be appropriate for that Independent Person to be involved in future stages of the process, should the matter be referred to the Sub-Committee.
- It is essential that the Independent Person communicates with the Monitoring Officer whenever he/she has been approached by any of the

parties to ensure that there is no conflict of interest at any future stage of the process.

- Reports will be made to the Standards Committee detailing all complaints received and how they have been dealt with by the Monitoring Officer. The legislation encourages informal resolution, where possible, of complaints that a Member has breached the Code.
- The process of how to make a complaint and the role and responsibility of the Monitoring Officer are available on the Council's website. It is not intended that the Independent Person is necessarily the first point of contact by a member of the public. If an Independent Person is contacted he/she should restrict discussions to ascertaining the nature of the grievance and advising how the complaints process works. In some cases assistance may be needed in helping a member of the public to articulate their concerns/grievance.
- In addition to information on the Council's website, the full procedure for making a complaint under the Members' Code of Conduct is in the Council's Constitution. Members requested that this information also be contained within a brief pamphlet to be available at the Council offices.

RECOMMENDED to Full Council that the Independent Persons protocol be approved and adopted. (HLEMS)

203 MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2012/13 – MID PROGRAMME REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services, which contained the mid-programme review of the 2012/13 Member Learning and Development Programme.

Following discussion of the proposals for a change to the mandatory planning training arrangements, the following was noted:-

- Non-attendance at even one session of the proposed four mandatory training sessions may result in a gap in essential information, due to constant changes in planning legislation. The proposals are on the basis that Members will have the information they need to participate effectively in planning matters.
- As different Members will have different learning styles, some Members may be able to gain the information they need by reading the handouts provided to accompany the planning training course.
- Prior to being elected as a Councillor, each candidate is made aware of the mandatory training dates for the forthcoming municipal year. This will continue under the new arrangements proposed.

- Afternoon and evening sessions of a course could be held on different days, which would make arrangements more flexible.
- Members who have not attended the requisite training will still be entitled to attend the Development Committee, but without voting rights until they have undertaken the training.
- Members have access to advice from planning officers at all Development Committee meetings.
- Independent Persons/Parish members of the Standards Committee will continue to be invited to all training sessions offered to District Council Members.

Officers were congratulated on achieving improved attendance figures at training sessions, the quality of which had been retained within the constraints of an extremely reduced budget.

In principle, the Committee accepted the desirability/necessity of having additional sessions of mandatory planning training throughout the year but were concerned that the proposed arrangements might be too inflexible, which would result in Members' ability to be fully involved in the Development Committee being compromised, through no fault of their own.

It was agreed that the new arrangement of four mandatory planning training sessions each year should be adopted but with a greater flexibility built in, to provide additional 'mop-up' sessions, should this be necessary. It was felt that this would provide a proper opportunity for Members to become fully qualified, although it was recognised that any additional sessions provided by officers would be at a cost in terms of officer time.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the 2012/13 Mid-Programme Review be noted.
- (2) That the recommitment for renewal of the Charter for Elected Member Development of funds through the budgetary process in the amount of £2,250 be endorsed. (HLEMS)

RECOMMENDED to Full Council that the arrangements for mandatory planning training, as detailed in report paragraphs 6.1 to 6.9, be adopted in the 2013/14 municipal year, subject to incorporating the following amendment:-

'That a greater flexibility be built in to the new arrangements to provide additional 'mop-up' sessions, should this be necessary.' (HLEMS)

The meeting closed at 9.01 pm.

Chairman

Date

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