

Standards Committee – 1 October 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **1 October 2013** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Vice-Chairman: Cllr D Merrick

Cllr R R Dray
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn
Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill

Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr M J Steptoe

INDEPENDENT PERSONS (INVITEES NON-VOTING)

Mr D J Cottis
Mr M G Drage
Mr S Shadbolt

PARISH MEMBERS (CO-OPTED NON-VOTING)

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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs L Walker.

OFFICERS PRESENT

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

189 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

190 CHARTER FOR ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services on the process of Charter reaccreditation.

During discussion, the following was noted:-

- The Candidates Guide, which had been designed during the original Charter accreditation process, remained a valuable tool in appraising prospective District Councillors of the duties of a District Councillor as well as giving an indication of the time commitment expected of the role. The Guide is updated each year and provided by the Council to all prospective

District Councillors.

- The Council's new Chief Executive would be interviewed as part of the Charter re-accreditation process and would be briefed prior to his interview on what the Council offers and has achieved in respect of Member development.
- District Council Members/Independent Persons and Parish Representatives of the Standards Committee who are available to attend the assessment day on 14 January would be interviewed as a group by the assessment team.
- A briefing session for all those involved in the assessment day would be arranged prior to the assessment.
- Although there has been a significant reduction in the Member training budget, there has been no corresponding reduction in the quality of training delivered to Members. Resources are now used more 'smartly', with an emphasis on maximum training opportunities. Savings have been made by the use, where possible, of District/County Council officers to deliver training, by holding training in Rochford Council accommodation and by there no longer being a requirement for Member attendance at the annual Standards for England conference, following disbandment of the old Standards regime.
- The delivery of training to Members provided a personal development opportunity for officers as well as improving the Member/officer relationship.
- Independent Persons on the Standards Committee are provided with the training needed to fulfil their role.

The mentoring of new Councillors was discussed. It was observed that all new Members, irrespective of whether or not they belong to a political party, could approach Executive/ experienced Members for advice when they are elected. However, it was felt that current induction arrangements tended to be 'party' focussed and that specific mentoring arrangements were needed for those newly elected Members who are independent of a political party.

Officers confirmed that they would look into further developing mentoring arrangements for newly elected independent Members.

Resolved

- (1) That Members assimilate Appendices 3 and 5 to the report, the 'direction of travel' statement and 'Assessment Day Briefing for Members' in preparation for the assessment day.

(2) That officers look further into developing mentoring arrangements for newly elected independent Members. (HLEMS)

191 MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2013/14 – MID-PROGRAMME REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services containing the mid-programme review of the 2013/14 Member Learning and Development Programme.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- Some of the smaller Parish Councils may not be able to afford to send Councillors to these courses.
- Parish/Town Councils have access to training under the Essex Association of Local Councils and many have their own training budgets.
- The drive to increase District Councillor attendance at training may have an impact on the number of available places for Parish/Town Councils on District Council courses.
- Course handouts, where available, are emailed to Parish/Town Council Clerks.

It was noted that arrangements for charging Parish/Town Councils for attendance at appropriate District Council Member training courses would form part of forthcoming budget discussions.

Officers would investigate attendance levels at courses specifically designed for Parish/Town Councils that have been held in the period May to September 2013.

Resolved

That the 2013/14 Mid-Programme review be noted.

The meeting closed at 9 pm.

Chairman

Date

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