

Standards Committee – 27 March 2019

Minutes of the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **27 March 2019** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs C A Weston
Vice-Chairman: Cllr R R Dray

Cllr Mrs J R Gooding
Cllr N J Hookway
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr R Milne
Cllr C M Stanley

INDEPENDENT PERSONS (INVITEES NON-VOTING)

Mr P Scott
Mr S Shadbolt
Mrs L Walker

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Cllrs Mrs M Cohen and Mrs D A Constable.

OFFICERS PRESENT

A Law - Assistant Director, Legal Services
M Power - Democratic Services Officer

57 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

58 LOCAL INVESTIGATIONS AND DETERMINATIONS – OCTOBER 2018 TO MARCH 2019

The Committee received a summary of complaints and queries received in relation to Members' behaviour under the Code of Conduct.

In response to questions, the following was noted:-

- Any formal complaints received between the date of publication of the officer report and 1 April would be included in the report to the Standards Committee in September 2019.
- All complaints received an initial assessment and were included in the report, regardless of whether there was a breach of the code. None of the complaints received during the period covered in the report had progressed to a formal hearing. The Monitoring Officer was available to assist

Parish/Town Clerks on matters relating to the Code of Conduct.

- Parish/Town Councils were invited to attend the Code of Conduct training provided each year by the District Council, completely free of charge.

Resolved

That the summary of complaints and determinations for the period October 2018 to March 2019 be received.

59 REPORT OF THE MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

The Committee considered the report of the Working Group.

The Chairman of the Working Group, Cllr Mrs C M Mason, presented a summary of the decisions and recommendations of the Working Group and thanked Members for their hard work. The training programme for the 2019/20 municipal year had been determined following consideration of requests from Members and information from officers. Training provided by the Review Committee for its Members would be extended to all Members (excluding the Executive) to enable potential substitutes to be trained. In view of comments received, where possible, trainers would be altered year on year to provide a greater variety of information and presentation methods. The training programme had been determined for the whole year and would be provided, as far as possible, evenly throughout the year. The revised administrative arrangements agreed by the Group would be included in the Member training booklet.

The concern expressed over the Code of Conduct training had been addressed by splitting the training for District and Parish/Town Councillors and sourcing a different trainer. This would allow the training to reflect the slightly differing needs and requirements of each group.

Due to concerns over chairmanship, Group Leaders would be asked to encourage full attendance at the chairmanship training organised. The Independent Person would liaise with the trainer on areas of concern that had been raised/witnessed.

To reduce cost and increase variation the Local Government Association had been approached to provide some of the courses, predominantly free of charge.

Post-course survey forms had been simplified and new methods had been put in place to ensure confidentiality. Trainers would be given a summary of the comments on request but not be able to see individual forms. The feedback provided should enable the Working Group to receive a more accurate reflection of the service provided and adjust where necessary.

Members would be asked in late September 2019 for any training requirements they would like to see provided in the forthcoming year and this, together with all other available information, would enable the Working Group to meet in October and plan for the training to be held in 2020/21.

Two areas were identified that had caused difficulty for the working group:

Firstly, the late publication of dates for the municipal year had made engagement of external trainers difficult. During discussion, it was noted that in the past Members had been provided with dates for training earlier in the year.

Secondly, there was an issue of internal trainers not being trained in presentation skills. Although knowledge of their subject matter was not in doubt, the Group felt that the lack of training in this area placed an unfair pressure on those members of staff. Correspondingly, feedback had indicated that Members felt that attendance at some of these sessions was not a productive use of their time.

A resident and former university lecturer in Educational Studies had offered to run this training free of charge; however, officer training was the responsibility of Human Resources through the Managing Director, and the offer had been declined. The Group was advised that 'train the trainer' training would be looked at as part of the staff development programme but that this was in the early stages of planning. The Working Group felt that if this matter was not addressed by September, there may be the need to rely solely on external trainers in 2020/21, which would lead to the need for an increased Member training budget.

During discussion, the Committee agreed that the Council had a responsibility to deliver training that was appropriate for Members and fit for purpose. Members felt that, as the lack of staff training in presentation skills might have a negative impact on the take up of courses by Members, a meeting with the Managing Director should be arranged as a matter of urgency.

Resolved

- (1) That it be **Recommended to the Portfolio Holder for Governance** that draft dates for Member training be available before the end of the preceding calendar year, and that confirmation be provided that this would be done.
- (2) That it be **Recommended to the Managing Director** that internal trainers be provided with appropriate training as a matter of urgency to enable them to present their knowledge to Members and to confirm when this would be done.
- (3) That a meeting be arranged between the Managing Director, the Chairman of the Standards Committee, the Chairman of the Working Group, along with an Independent Person, to discuss the issue of appropriate training for staff as per recommendation (2).

The meeting closed at 8.18 pm.

Chairman

Date

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