

Standards Committee – 12 July 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the **Standards Committee** held on **12 July 2016** when there were present:-

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

Cllr D S Efde
Cllr C M Stanley

Cllr M J Steptoe

INDEPENDENT PERSONS (INVITEES NON-VOTING)

Mr P Scott
Mr S Shadbolt
Mrs L Walker

PARISH MEMBERS (CO-OPTED NON-VOTING)

Cllr P A Beckers

VISITING MEMBER

Cllr Mrs J R Gooding

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs I Cassar and E O K Mason and Parish Cllrs Mrs D A Constable and Mrs L A Vingoe.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr Mrs C M Mason for Cllr E O K Mason
Cllr J R F Mason for Cllr Mrs I Cassar

OFFICERS PRESENT

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

154 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

155 LOCAL INVESTIGATIONS AND DETERMINATIONS – ANNUAL SUMMARY 2015/16

Members considered the annual summary of local investigations and determinations dealt with between April 2015 and March 2016.

It was commented that having a total of only five complaints in the 12 month period indicated a high level of integrity among Councillors.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

156 MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director, Democratic Services relating to Member Learning and Development.

During discussion, the following was observed:

- A planning training session tailored specifically for all newly elected Members of the Council covering basic areas of planning and legislation should be provided to newly elected Members of the Council by the Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration Services. This should be mandatory for newly elected Members prior to their attendance at a Development Committee meeting.
- Any eLearning introduced would be optional and in addition to existing mandatory training arrangements. The Committee would need to consider any proposals for eLearning provision before it is implemented. In the same way, any proposals in respect of eLearning for Parish/Town Councils would be considered by the Committee.
- Members felt that continuing the current arrangement of offering four mandatory planning dates per year had too great an impact on the officer resource as well as making it difficult to ensure that the topics included in the training were not repeated unnecessarily. Having three sessions per annum would make it easier to deliver training that is tailored specifically to Members' needs. Mandatory planning training should be offered as two sessions: afternoon and evening.
- Feedback from Members on the time of day they would prefer training courses to be held should be reviewed periodically to ensure that arrangements for training are relevant to Members of the Council at the time. This can be done either via a survey following the election of new Members to the Council or added to the annual Member Learning and Development evaluation questionnaire.
- The Chairman of the Development Committee could be usefully included in discussions on the content of planning training sessions.
- The reasons that Council had decided to offer a separate, bespoke planning training session for Parish/Town Councils were that Parish Councils perform a different role to the District Council in the Planning process, as well as there being too little space in the training room to

accommodate large numbers

- In his role of Deputy Leader of the Council, Cllr M J Steptoe would be visiting the Rochford Hundred Association of Local Councils (RHALC) over the next few months and would report back to the Committee on the outcome of any training related issues discussed with the Parish/Town Councils.
- Each Parish/Town Council has the option of one free space on the bespoke planning training courses offered by the District Council. When appointed, the Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration Services can approach Parish/Town Council Clerks to establish the content they would find useful to be included in this training. The RHALC may be the appropriate forum for such a discussion and the Deputy Leader can raise this matter also during the course of his proposed visits. He can then feed back information directly to the Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration Services as well as to the next meeting of the Standards Committee.
- A course outline detailing the content of planning training organised for Parish/Town Councils should be provided in advance to Parish/Town Clerks.

Resolved

- (1) That the current arrangement of four mandatory planning training sessions be reduced to three, to be held in May, September and November each year. The mandatory training requirement to start afresh each Municipal Year and attendance at a minimum of two training sessions during the Municipal Year to be mandatory. Members newly elected to the Development Committee would be required to attend a scheduled training session before they can take part in a Development Committee meeting.
- (2) That newly elected Members of the Council be required to attend the bespoke training organised specifically for them before they participate in a Development Committee meeting.
- (3) That an afternoon and evening option be offered for each of the three mandatory planning sessions.
- (4) That detailed discussion on the delivery of mandatory planning training be held when the new Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration Services is in post. The contents of each training session to be discussed and agreed in advance by the Assistant Director with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and the Chairman of the Development Committee.

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- (5) That, on the basis of the outcome of the survey, wherever possible, the current arrangement of afternoon and evening sessions for Member training courses be maintained.
- (6) That, in future, bespoke planning training for Parish/Town Councils be held in the evening and only proceed if at least half (seven) of the Councils have an attendee. (ADDS)

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Chairman

Date

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