



Minutes of the meeting of the STANDARDS COMMITTEE held on TUESDAY 14 JUNE 2016 at 6.00 pm.

- Present:** Councillor Miles (Chair)
Councillors Alexander (Vice-Chair), D Hopkins, McDonald, McKenzie, McPake, Patey-Smith, Small, Wallis and Webb (Vice-Chair).
Parish Councillor Ballantyne
- Officers:** S Bridglalsingh (Monitoring Officer/Acting Service Director ([Legal and Democratic Services]) and T Milner (Committee Manager).
- Apologies:** Councillor Small and Parish Councillor Walker

ST01 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed new and returning Committee members along with the new Acting Service Director (Legal & Democratic Services), to the first meeting of the Standards Committee for 2016/17.

ST02 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 8 March 2016 and the special meeting of the Standards Committee held on 25 May 2016 be approved and signed by the Chair as correct records.

ST03 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None declared.

ST04 PERIOD REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

The Committee considered the Monitoring Officer's Periodic report in respect of complaints and investigations covered during the period from 1 March 2016 to 1 June 2016.

The Committee heard that there had been 9 complaints concerning Borough Council members, and as informed at the last Standards Committee meeting held on 8 March 2016. Seven of the complaints were linked to one Borough Councillor's behaviour at a meeting, and upon conclusion of discussions between the Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person, the view was that the complaints had no merit and did not justify further investigation. The remaining 2 complaints were in the early stages of consideration, and any outcomes would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Monitoring Officer reassured the Committee that the process in place to investigate complaints under the Localism Act 2011 was very thorough and that since 1 July 2012, the Council had seen a large decrease in the number of complaints made against Borough Councillors and Parish Councillors, which was also reflected nationally.

The Committee also heard that there had been no recent reported complaints against Parish Councillors.

RESOLVED -

That the report be noted.

ST05

PARISH COUNCILLOR RECRUITMENT

The Committee received an oral update in respect of Parish Councillor Recruitment from the Monitoring Officer.

The Committee heard that the 4 year membership of co-opted Parish Councillors to the Standards Committee was due to expire on 1 May 2017. Additionally, due to the resignation from Parish Councillor Carman at the meeting on 8 March 2016, there was an opportunity to look at either recruiting up-to 2 additional co-opted Parish Councillors to the Committee, or for the Council to commence the Parish Councillor recruitment exercise for up-to 4 co-opted members to be in place with effect from 2 May 2017. A draft recruitment package would be provided to a future Committee meeting.

RESOLVED -

1. That the oral update be noted.
2. That the Monitoring Officer be requested, to undertake a Parish Councillor recruitment exercise for representation of between 2 to 4 Parish Councillors on the Standards Committee, ahead of the commencement of new Council year 2017/18.
3. That, prior to advertising, the Monitoring Officer be requested to submit the draft Parish Councillor Recruitment package to a future meeting of the Standards Committee.

ST06

RECRUITMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS – SECTION 28 LOCALISM ACT 2011

The Committee received an oral update in respect of the Recruitment of Independent Persons – Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 from the Monitoring Officer.

The Committee heard that the Council had 2 options available to them, either to extend the current arrangement in place, which had proved to have worked extremely well over the last 4 years, or to look hosting a full recruitment process, working alongside Central Bedfordshire, to appoint a new Panel of Independent Persons.

On being put to the vote the proposal to extend the current arrangements in place at the Council was carried, and it was;

RESOLVED -

1. That the oral update be noted.
2. That the current arrangements for the appointment of Independent Persons be extended for an additional 4 year period to commence from September 2016, subject to approval by Council, as required by the Localism Act 2011 (Commencement No. 6 and Transitional Savings and Transitory Provisions) Order 2012 (as amended).

ST07

STANDARDS TRAINING - BOROUGH AND PARISH COUNCILS

The Committee received an oral update in respect of Standards Training for Borough and Parish Councils.

The Committee heard that Standards training sessions were being looked into for the autumn 2016 and upon finalisation of arrangements, the Councillor and Electoral Services Manager would inform Borough Councillors and Parish Councils of the details.

The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that she would incorporate an update on Standards training after the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED -

1. That the oral update be noted.
2. That the next training session on Code of Conduct and the Localism Act 2011 for Borough and Parish Councillors be held after the conclusion of the meeting of the Standards Committee on 13 September 2016.

ST08

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting of the Standards Committee would be held on 13 September 2016 at 6.00pm.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 6.20 PM