

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held on Thursday, 14 June, 2012 at 6.00 p.m. at Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors S. Davies, T.J. Hope, M.B. Hosken, R.J. Sloan and A.J. Stanton;
Mr A. Selvaratnam (Chair) and Mr F. Beasland (Independent Members);
Councillors D. Edwards, P. Fairclough, R. Wickson and R. Williams (Parish Council representatives)

ST-1 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 8 February 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

ST-2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors R.C. Evans and A.D. McClements

ST-3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

ST-4 THE WAY FORWARD FOR STANDARDS - UPDATE

The Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & Public Protection and Monitoring Officer presented a report which provided the Committee with an update on the transfer to the new ethical framework, in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011.

Much of the work in preparing for the new standards regime had already been undertaken. On 3rd May 2012, full Council had approved the Committee's recommendations on a new ethical standards framework for the Council. This included the adoption of a new Code of Conduct for Members, and draft procedures in relation to the new disclosable pecuniary interests. The detailed Regulations on the new regime had only just been issued by the Government, and the Monitoring Officer reported that he would use his delegated powers to make any necessary amendments to the Code, the disclosure of registrable interests and associated guidance/procedures. Members would be required to complete a new Declaration of Registrable Interests forms, and would be encouraged to do this as soon as possible after the new Code of Conduct came into force. All Members would be notified by the end of June about what was required, and Parish Clerks were regularly being updated on the position.

In relation to the appointment of the independent person for the new regime, the recruitment process was underway, and was likely to be a joint appointment with the Shropshire & Wrekin Combined Fire Authority. The

latest Government guidance suggested that Independent Members of Standards Committees currently in post would not be allowed to be appointed as the independent person. There were two outstanding Code of Conduct complaints, both of which were due to proceed to a hearing. One of these was being dealt with on 29 June, but the other had had to be deferred. However, it would still be able to be determined after 1 July using transitional arrangements.

The Monitoring Officer noted that this meeting would be the last of the Standards Committee in its current form, and paid tribute to the Independent Members and Parish Council representatives who had served on the Committee, but whose membership would cease on 30 June. Their commitment and experience had been invaluable in meeting the increasing demands placed upon the Committee, and their contribution was greatly appreciated.

One of the Parish Council representatives expressed regret that there would no longer be Parish representation on the Standards Committee, and asked whether there was provision for Parish representatives to be co-opted on to the “new” Standards Committee. The Monitoring Officer replied that while co-option was possible, it was difficult to see what meaningful role they could play, given that the new regime now put the onus on Parishes themselves to take responsibility for good governance and the conduct of their members.

RESOLVED –

- (a) that the report be noted;**
- (b) that the commitment and long service to the Standards Committee of the Independent Members, Mr Arul Selvaratnam and Mr Frank Beasland, be recognised and formally recorded;**
- (c) that the commitment and long service to the Standards Committee of the Parish representatives, Councillors Roy Williams, Ray Wickson, David Edwards and Patricia Fairclough, be recognised and formally recorded.**

The meeting ended at 6.20 pm

Chairman:

Date: