

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held on Thursday, 13 December, 2012 at 6.00 p.m. at Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors R.C. Evans (Chair), T.J. Hope, A.D. McClements and R.J. Sloan

ST-14 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 19 September 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

ST-15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors S. Davies, M.B. Hosken and A.J. Stanton

ST-16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

ST-17 UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW STANDARDS REGIME

The Legal Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer presented a report which provided the Committee with an update on the implementation of the new standards regime.

Except for two Parish Councils where details were still awaited, all authorities had now confirmed that they had adopted a Code of Conduct. Unfortunately, there were still a number of Declaration of Interest Forms outstanding from Parish Councillors. Officers continued to chase these, and had clearly explained to the Clerks of Town and Parish Councils the implications of failure to provide this information. The Parish and Town Councils with outstanding Declarations of Interests forms were listed in the report. The information from all the forms received had now been uploaded to the Council's website. There had been no complaints against Councillors received since the last meeting of the Committee in December.

Members considered what further action could be taken to encourage compliance with the new regime, and enquired whether there was resistance from some Parish Councils. The Legal Services Manager advised that, apart from a couple of Parishes, some, though not all, forms had been received from those Councils listed in the report. There did not appear to be any open hostility from Parishes to the new regime, and the Monitoring Officer had been attempting to strike a balance between monitoring and enforcement. While endorsing a low-key approach, Members felt that it was unfair to those who had completed a Declaration of Interests form if others were not doing so, and

therefore a further reminder should be sent to Town and Parish Council Clerks about outstanding forms.

The Chair referred to the Committee's work programme, and whether anything needed to be added. It was felt that there was still some confusion among Members about the implications of the new standards framework on issues such as pre-determination, and that some more training and guidance could be provided (including examples from case studies). The Legal Services Manager stated that a Members Information Seminar could be arranged for 2013, and that dispensations was another topic that could be covered. In terms of the number of meetings for the 2013/14 municipal year, Members were of the view that only three programmed meetings were required for delivering the work programme. It was noted that the Committee's terms of reference stated that quarterly reports would be received from the Monitoring Officer, but that these didn't necessarily need to be in the form of a formal Committee report.

RESOLVED –

- (a) that progress towards adoption of a code of conduct by the Borough and Town & Parish Councils, and the completion of their interests forms by Members, be noted, and that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to send a reminder to the Clerks of those Parish and Town Councils with forms still outstanding;**
- (b) that the update on complaints received since the adoption of the new code of conduct be noted;**
- (c) that an Information Seminar, for Borough and Town & Parish Members, be arranged for the first quarter of 2013 to provide further clarification and guidance on the new standards regime;**
- (d) that for the 2013/14 municipal year, meetings of the Committee be programmed for July 2013, November 2013 and March 2014.**

The meeting ended at 6.25 pm

Chairman:

Date: