

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held on Wednesday, 19 September, 2012 at 6.00 p.m. at Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors R.C. Evans (Chair), S. Davies, T.J. Hope, M.B. Hosken and A.D. McClements

ST-10 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 24 August 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

ST-11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors R.J. Sloan and A.J. Stanton

ST-12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

ST-13 STANDARDS COMMITTEE – A NEW ROLE FOR A NEW FUTURE

The Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & Public Protection and Monitoring Officer presented a report which provided the Committee with an update on the implementation of the new standards regime and to consider how best to develop its role in the future.

On 12 July 2012, full Council had adopted a new code of conduct, and approved the terms of reference for the “new” Standards Committee and Hearings Sub-Committee along with the arrangements for the investigation of complaints. Work had been progressed on the appointment of an Independent Person (as required in the new legislation), with the Chair being involved in interviewing candidates. Council had, on 12 September 2012, approved the appointment of Michael Tebbutt to the role of Independent Person (and Christopher Humphries as reserve) for an initial period of two and a half years. As previously agreed, this was a joint appointment with the Combined Fire Authority. The Monitoring Officer added that he would be meeting the two appointees to discuss their role and the training they would require. In response to a question about the termination of the appointment (from either side), the Monitoring Officer advised that there was no specific provision for this, but that he would look at whether something was needed

One complaint had been received since the start of the new regime. The Monitoring Officer reported that it had been decided, in consultation with the Independent Person designate (as he then was), the matter was more related

to the actions of a Committee rather than an individual Councillor – and so the complaint had not been progressed.

In relation to the adoption of the Code and completion of the new register of interests forms, there was only one outstanding interests form from a Borough Member. Work was continuing with Town and Parish Clerks to ensure they were complying with the new rules. There were still around 15 parishes who had yet to return forms for all their Members, but it was hoped that the process would be substantially complete by the end of October. Members expressed some concern at the slow response from some parishes, and asked what more could be done to encourage compliance. It was suggested that a reminder could be given at the next Parish Forum meeting, and the Monitoring Officer added that he would continue to monitor the situation and work as closely as possible with the parishes in line with Parish Charter principles. Any significant problems that required further action would be reported to the Committee.

The Committee's terms of reference were appended to the report, and the Monitoring Officer proposed an amendment to paragraph 6 so as to read "to oversee the process for the recruitment of an Independent Person (and up to 2 reserves) and make recommendations to the Council for their appointment". A proposed work programme for the remainder of the year was shown in the report, along with a proposal to consult on whether to develop a mediation service to support town and parish councils to manage conduct issues at a local level. In response to a question about how such a service would be funded, the Monitoring Officer advised that it was something that could be provided by a TWC Officer as it was recognised that external support could be expensive. .

RESOLVED –

- (a) that the appointment of the Independent Person and Reserve be noted;**
- (b) 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;**
- (c) that the update on complaints received since the adoption of the new code of conduct be noted;**
- (d) that paragraph 6 of the terms of reference of the Committee, as shown at Appendix 1 of the report, be amended by adding the words "up to" before the words "2 reserves";**
- (e) that the work plan for the Committee up to March 2013, as shown in the report, be approved;**
- (f) that all members of the Standards Committee be appointed to the Hearings Sub-Committee.**

The meeting ended at 6.22 pm

Chairman:

Date: