

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held on Tuesday, 31 October 2017 at 6pm in Meeting Room G3-G4, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT

Present: Councillors E Clare (Chair), M J Smith (Vice Chair), S Barnes, A R H England and R T Kiernan.

In Attendance: J Eatough (Assistant Director: Governance, Procurement & Commissioning and Monitoring Officer).

ST-01 Apologies for Absence

Councillors G C W Reynolds.

ST-02 Declarations of Interest

None

ST-03 Minutes

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 25 April 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

ST-04 Review of the Terms of Reference / Update Report

The Committee received the report presented by the Monitoring Officer. There were currently no changes required to the Terms of Reference of the Committee.

Training

A social media training event had been held on 11 September 2017 which gave Members an overview and examples of good and bad use of social media and its pitfalls.

The Monitoring Officer informed Members that he would be undertaking a Training event for Wellington Town Council in December regarding code of conduct, social media and the management of meetings.

Following the agreement to set up an online training programme, the Ollie Training Programme was still in progress and this would be available in due course.

Register of Interests

The Monitoring Officer reported that there had been a lot of changes with regard to Parish and Town Councils due to recent elections and co-options. E-mails were being sent to Parish and Town Council Clerks to remind them to update their Member details and this was currently ongoing.

Complaints

The Monitoring Officer reported on the complaints received since the last meeting, the following being brought to their attention:

- Member on Member Complaints - these situations were often robust views within a debate and unless considered really serious there were not referred to Investigation. It was hoped to encourage Parish and Town Councils to challenge these incidents upon their occurrence.
- Proportionality of reporting of minor incidents – it was expected that Councillors and the public would have a robust debates. No complaints had been referred during the reporting period.
- Serious issues – the use of mediation could be used as necessary in order for serious complaints to be resolved for Borough issues. For Parish and Town Councils this was an internal matter, but was a material consideration when reviewing complaints.

The Monitoring Officer asked for Members' views regarding the current approach to dealing with complaints.

During the discussion felt that Borough Council Group Leaders should manage their Members if issues became difficult. Members considered the current approach to managing complaints was acceptable.

RESOLVED – that:

- a) the current terms of reference be approved; and
- b) the contents of the report be noted and the outlined approach taken by the Monitoring Officer be supported.

ST-05 Review of Department for Communities and Local Government Consultation on updating Disqualification Criteria for Local Authority Members

The Assistant Director: Governance, Procurement & Commissioning presented the report on the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Consultation on updating Disqualification Criteria for Local Authority Members and sought Members' views in order to be put forward a response to the consultation. In order for Members to put forward their comments it was suggested that the recommendation be amended to include the written response be written in consultation with the Chair prior to sending to the DCLG.

After some general discussion members considered the specific questions raised in the consultation document

The Assistant Director: Governance, Procurement & Commissioning took Members through the consultation questions and the answers as follows:

Q1 Do you agree that an individual who is subject to the notification requirements set out in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (i.e. who is on the sex offenders register) should be prohibited from standing for election, or holding office, as a member of a local authority, mayor of a combined authority, member of the London Assembly or London Mayor?

Members felt strongly in agreement that an individual should be prohibited from acting for public office if a person was named on the sex offenders register.

Q2 Do you agree that an individual who is subject to a Sexual Risk Order should not be prohibited from standing for election, or holding office, as a member of a local authority, mayor of a combined authority, member of the London Assembly or London Mayor?

No, Members considered that although under a Sexual Risk Order an individual was not cautioned they felt strongly that they should be prohibited from acting for public office.

Q3. Do you agree that an individual who has been issued with a Civil Injunction (made under section 1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014) or a Criminal Behaviour Order (made under section 22 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014) should be prohibited from standing for election, or holding office, as a member of a local authority, mayor of a combined authority, member of the London Assembly or London Mayor?

Yes. Members were in agreement that individuals who had been made the subject of civil injunctions or Criminal Behaviour Orders should be prohibited from acting for public office.

Q4. Do you agree that being subject to a Civil Injunction or a Criminal Behaviour Order should be the only anti-social behaviour-related reasons why an individual should be prohibited from standing for election, or holding office, as a member of a local authority, mayor of a combined authority, member of the London Assembly or London Mayor?

Yes. Members were in agreement that only anti-social behaviour-related reasons should be the reasons why an individual should be prohibited from acting for the public office.

RESOLVED – that a written response be made to the DCLG in accordance with the Committee’s decision and in consultation with the Chair prior to sending.

The meeting ended at 6.37 pm

Chairman:

Date: