

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held on Tuesday, 25 April 2017 at 6pm in Meeting Room G3-G4, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT**

**Present:** Councillors K S Sahota (Chair), M J Smith (Vice Chair), S Barnes, N A M England and R T Kiernan.

**In Attendance:** S Dodd (Democratic & Legal Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer), J Eatough (Assistant Director: Governance, Procurement & Commissioning and Monitoring Officer).

**Also in Attendance:** Councillor A J Eade

#### **ST-14      Apologies for Absence**

Councillors R J Sloan and M J Smith.

#### **ST-15      Declarations of Interest**

None

#### **ST-16      Minutes**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 5 July 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

The Chair introduced S Dodd who had taken up the role of Democratic & Legal Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer.

#### **ST-17      STANDARDS UPDATE FROM THE MONITORING OFFICER AND REVIEW OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee received the report presented by the Monitoring Officer. The report provided an update on work undertaken in relation to the ethical framework, including register of disclosable pecuniary interests, complaints received, training and the introduction of a social media protocol.

#### **Register of Interests**

The Monitoring Officer reported that it was a statutory requirement to establish and maintain a register of interests for members and co-opted members of the Council, together with a similar register for all Parish and Town Councils within the Borough. All Borough Council forms were complete and up-to-date, but despite a number of reminders there were still a number of Parish and Town Council forms which were outstanding. The Monitoring Officer proposed that he would write to all Parish and Town Councils to remind them to complete and submit these forms.

Following a brief discussion and upon being put to the vote it was, unanimously:-

**RESOLVED that the Monitoring Officer write to Parish and Town Council Clerks to ask them to check their records and update information as required.**

### Complaints

The Monitoring Officer reported on the complaints received since the last meeting. Complaints received regarding social media would be considered in the next Report on the Agenda.

### Training

Following a request for training, the former Deputy Monitoring Officer had provided Code of Conduct training to Parish Councillors, Clerks and Officers in September 2016.

During the debate, some Members suggested that training be targeted at new Councillors and that training could be given upon their induction to elected and co-opted members as well as Parish/Town Councillors and that good working relationships were developed with Clerks. It was suggested that rather than running a training session that an Ollie training package be developed which would be free and accessible to all Members of the Borough and Parish/Town Councils.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that training was given to Members following an election, that some relationships with Parish/Town Councils were better than others and that the responsibility lay with the Clerks to sign up to the register of interests.

**RESOLVED – that a free and accessible training programme for new Councillors, Co-opted Members and Parish and Town Councillors be developed on “Ollie”.**

### **ST-18 REVIEW OF PROTOCOL FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

The Chair introduced the report and asked Members for constructive ideas on the development of the Social Media Protocol.

The Monitoring Officer reported that the protocol was formerly published last year and had been developed by Members for Members and was a useful document. Due to a number of complaints received, which had been detailed in the Monitoring Officer's Update Report earlier in the meeting, it was proposed that it might be sensible to further review the protocol.

Legal Services Manager informed Members that she had met with the Independent Person and the Monitoring Officer to discuss the policy and it was suggested that a two hour training session be given to all Borough Members and Parish and Town Councils in order for them to fully understand the Policy and its implications. The training would be built around real case examples relating to facebook and twitter,

the issues around commenting and re-tweeting public posts and using privacy settings.

A discussion took place and Members considered that there were growing problems with the use of social media and the interpretation of comments and concerns were raised as to the amount of officer time taken to deal with the complaints, bullying, the impact on the reputation of the Council and the tweeting of false statements. Members felt that the policy could be more robust and it was suggested that zero tolerance policy be put in place together with sanctions. With regards to training, although Members felt that this was essential, face to face training courses were not well attended. A suggestion came forward that an “Ollie” Training Programme could be developed which would be free and available to all Members together with Parish and Town Councils.

The Monitoring Officers suggested to Members that the Policy be reviewed and a second page be added showing specific examples of where things had gone wrong. The Policy, once approved, could go out to Group Leaders for endorsement.

The Legal Services Manager confirmed that an interactive training package through Ollie would be developed.

Following the discussions it was:

**RESOLVED – that the contents of the report be noted.**

The meeting ended at 7.01 pm

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:** .....