

Standards Committee Minutes

Date: 12 November 2012

Time: 6.15 - 6.45 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs L M Clarke (in the Chair)

Councillor Ms R Knight, Councillor J L Richards OBE, Councillor J A Savage and Councillor Ms J D Wassell.

Also Present as Observers: Revd G Hargrove & Mrs E Springford (Independent Persons)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D J Carroll and Councillor Mrs G A Jones

1 APPOINTMENT OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That (i) Councillor Mrs L M Clarke be appointed Chairman of the Standards Committee for 2012/13; and

(ii) Councillor Ms J D Wassell be appointed Vice- Chairman of the Standards Committee for 2012/13

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the standards Committee held on 27 June 2012 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

4 APPOINTMENT OF NON-VOTING PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTES

The Committee was advised that under the new standards arrangements introduced by the Localism Act, the District Council continued to have responsibility for dealing with standards complaints against Parish Councillors, but that, with the abolition of the statutory Standards Committee under the old regime, the Parish Council representatives had ceased to hold office.

However, on 31 July 2012, the Council had agreed that the Parish Councils be invited to nominate a maximum of three Parish Councillors to be co-opted as non-

voting members of the Committee under the new Standards arrangements. The report before the Committee recommended the co-option of three Parish Councillors, whose names had been put forward by the Wycombe District Association of Local Councils (WDALC). It was noted that all had previously served as Parish Council members on the former Standards Committee.

RESOLVED: That Parish Councillors D Banfield, J Sherlock and Mrs V Smith be co-opted onto the Standards Committee as non-voting members, until Annual Council in 2013.

5 TERMS OF REFERENCE OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The report before the Committee set out new terms of reference for the committee that had been revised in light of the extensive changes made to the standards regime by the Localism Act 2011. The District Solicitor advised members that the reference to membership as set out in Note 2 at the end of the terms of reference, should have read:

2 Membership to be made up as follows:- 8 Councillors in accordance with political balance, and including one Member of the Cabinet (ie delete the words *at least*).

The Committee agreed the terms of reference as amended above, but concern was expressed about the number of Cabinet Members who had been appointed to serve on the Committee. The District Solicitor agreed to raise this with the Leader of the Council.

Members further requested that the new terms of reference together with a reminder of the revised arrangements for making a complaint about a councillor be circulated to all Parish Clerks for information.

RESOLVED: (i) To recommend Regulatory & Appeals Committee the terms of reference as set out in Appendix A to the report, subject to the amendment to Note 2 referred to above; and

(ii) that the new terms of reference together with a reminder of the revised arrangements for making a complaint about a councillor be circulated to all Parish Clerks for information.

6 COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS & COMMENTS QUARTER 1 INFORMATION AND IMPROVEMENTS AND LGO (LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN) ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12

The Committee's attention was drawn to the quarterly statistics relating to complaints made about the Council's services. The report set out the complaints received by service and whether or not these were dealt with within the Council's targets. Annual figures for 2010 through to 2012 were presented to show comparisons over the years.

Also submitted was the Annual Review Letter from the Local Government Ombudsman and Members were pleased to note that there had been no findings of maladministration.

RESOLVED: that the data and charts for the period 1 April to 30 June 2012 (Quarter 1) as set out in Appendix A to the report be noted.

7 MINUTES OF LOCAL STANDARDS HEARING PANEL 12 JUNE 2012

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Local Standards Hearing Panel held on 12 June 2012 be received.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

David Ruddock - District Solicitor
Susan Rogers - Democratic Services Officer