

Standards Committee Minutes

Date: 5 January 2016

Time: 6.15 - 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor C Etholen (in the Chair)

Councillors Mrs J A Adey, S Broadbent, M Clarke, Parish Councillor Mr A Cobden, A R Green, G Houalla, M Pearce and Parish Cllr Mr B Swain, K Ahmed and A D Collingwood

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ms Wassell, and Councillor R Raja.

15 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was noted that there were three parish council observer positions on the Standards Committee. Since the last meeting Parish Cllr Mrs V Smith had resigned and Parish Cllr Mr A Cobden had joined the Committee. It was noted that there was now one parish council observer vacancy and Wycombe District Association of Local Councils (WDALC) would be contacted to provide a replacement.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 13 October 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

17 DISPENSATIONS

A report was considered which requested that authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to grant dispensations to Members in relation to a decision concerning Members' Allowances. It was noted that at an earlier meeting the Committee had given delegated power to the Monitoring Officer regarding dispensations where circumstances arise that so many Members would have DPs which would then impede the transaction of business, or where without a dispensation every Member of Cabinet would have a DP prohibition from participating. Also in June 2015, the Monitoring Officer was delegated authority to grant dispensations in relation to setting the Council Tax.

The revisions to the Code of Conduct were considered at full Council on 14 December 2015 which clarified the obligation to members to refrain from taking part in meetings where they have non-DPs as well as DPs. As Members' Allowances

are non-DPIs to allow members to consider and decide upon them explicit dispensations are now necessary.

In considering the report it was suggested that other charges may require dispensations such as car parking charges and dispensations for Charter Trustees may also need to be considered. It was noted that these could come under the general dispensations delegated power and as Charter Trustees must be Councillors to become a Charter Trustee then the dispensations would apply in this instance. However it was agreed that the recommendation be amended to specifically include other charges.

RESOLVED: That the Monitoring Office under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011, be delegated authority to grant dispensations until 2 May 2019 to Members in relation to decisions concerning Members' Allowances and the setting of any other charges affecting Members.

18 QUARTERLY UPDATE ON STANDARDS COMPLAINTS

A report was submitted which provided an overview of recent complaint cases regarding Member conduct since October 2015. Members were informed that since the last meeting two new complaints had been submitted relating to members of Parish Councils. One complaint was at Stage 1 and the other proceeding to Stage 2, an update as to progress would be supplied to the next meeting.

It was noted that the figures presented indicated that the complaints system was being utilised in a positive way with the public being aware and making use of the Council's complaints process.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

19 STANDARDS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE - CONSTITUTION REVIEW

The Committee noted that as part of the wider review of the Council's Constitution, each Committee was being invited to review its terms of reference.

This Committee's review would feed back into the wider review which was to be reported in its entirety for consideration to the Regulatory and Appeals Committee in early 2016.

RESOLVED: That no changes be made to the current Terms of Reference.

20 SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS

There were no supplementary items.

21 URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Jemma Durkan - Senior Democratic Services Officer
Julie Openshaw - District Solicitor