

Standards Committee

Date: 5 June 2018

Time: 6.15 - 6.32 pm

PRESENT: Councillor C Etholen (In the Chair)

Councillors: D J Carroll, M Clarke, A R Green, R Newman, S Saddique and J Savage

Parish Councillor: Mr A Cobden, Mr T Nolan and Mrs H Stearn.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Mr G Houalla.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 20 March 2018 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the chairman subject to the inclusion of Councillor S Saddique's apologies and in the attendee list inclusion of the words "(Parish Councillor) Mr" Nolan.

4 UPDATE ON THE INDEPENDENT PERSON VACANCY / APPOINTMENT

The report provided a further update on the Independent Person appointment which had been previously considered at the meetings of this Committee on 9 January and 20 March 2018. Members had been informed of the vacancy which existed as a result of the death of one of the Independent Persons and that consequently the Monitoring Officer had carried out a recruitment exercise to fill the vacancy. This process had now been concluded.

At the last meeting Members had also been informed that the currently serving Independent Person is willing to continue to serve for a further 5 years, a statement which had been welcomed by the whole Committee.

The Monitoring Officer reported that as a result of the recruitment exercise 2 applicants had ultimately applied. Each had a wealth of experience and both were very well qualified to carry out the role. The Monitoring Officer in collaboration with the Chairman of the Committee had conducted the interview process and had agreed that a recommendation should be sought by full Council to appoint Mr

Christopher Morley to the role of Independent Person to the Standards Committee, until 12 May 2023.

The report also sought a recommendation to Council to re-confirm Mr Gilbert Houalla's appointment until 12 May 2023. This would ensure 2 serving Independent Persons providing an adequate level of resilience within the role.

In response to a Member's question the Monitoring Officer expanded on the detail of Mr Morley's background and career history, outlining the various roles he had occupied and confirming that two very positive personal references had been received.

Members unanimously agreed that it be

RECOMMENDED: That

- (i) Mr Christopher Morley be appointed to the role of Independent Person under the Localism Act 2011 until 12 May 2023
- (ii) The term of office of Mr Gilbert Houalla as Independent Person under the Localism Act 2011 be re- confirmed until 12 May 2023

5 MODERN SLAVERY TRANSPARENCY STATEMENT - ANNUAL REVIEW

A report was submitted which requested approval of the publication of the revised Modern Slavery Transparency Statement (appended to the report) and its referral to Full Council at its July meeting for endorsement.

Members were informed that a first version of the document had been produced last year, and that in the same way as then, input on the revised version had been sought from officers working in Procurement, HR, Fraud Prevention and the Communities and Environment teams.

The report stated that the Modern Slavery Act 2015 placed a duty on large commercial organisations to publish Annual Statements setting out the steps taken to prevent slavery and human trafficking; although the publication of a statement was not obligatory for Local Councils, and whilst the statement did not completely mitigate the risk of such practices coming to light, it was good practice to publish such a statement. This would evidence that the Council took seriously its role in the prevention of modern slavery and as such had put into place robust steps to assist

in its prevention of slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking.

The Monitoring Officer informed Members that annual reviews of the statement would continue.

A Member suggested that under Employee Code of Conduct the sentence “The Council strives to maintain the highest standards of employee conduct and ethical behaviour and breaches are investigated” should read “The Council strives to maintain the highest standards of employee conduct and ethical behaviour and alleged breaches are investigated by line managers.”

The Monitoring Officer was content with this amendment and Members agreed.

RECOMMENDED: That subject to the amended wording above, the revised Modern Slavery Transparency Statement appended to the report be supported and approved for publication.

6 UPDATE ON ROLE OF THE MO / CODE OF CONDUCT PRESENTATION (TRAINING) TO B&MKALC ON 19 APRIL

Members were invited to note that a presentation had been given to the Bucks and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils Conference (B&MKALC).

Members were informed that on 19 April 2018 the Monitoring Officer had been invited by the B&MKALC to conduct a presentation on the topics of the role of the Monitoring Officer and the Code of Conduct, within its conference on respect, trust and working relationships, with the intention of promoting good working relationships and behaviour within the town and parish councils.

The report also provided details of other key speakers that had been in attendance and the topics they had covered.

Members were informed that the feedback received from the (B&MKALC) following the presentation had been very positive, particularly with regards to its helpfulness in the promotion of increasing understanding and informing attendees in accordance with the aims of the conference.

Parish Councillor Mrs Stearn added that Hughenden Parish had indeed confirmed that the presentation conducted by the Monitoring Officer had been very well received.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

7 QUARTERLY UPDATE

The report provided a further overview of recent member conduct and complaint cases since the last meeting held on 20 March 2018.

It was confirmed that no complaints had been outstanding at the date of the last meeting. At the time of writing today's report, one new complaint had been anticipated which had now been submitted and was at Stage 1 of the process. Further progress would be reported to the next meeting.

The Chairman stated that whilst there was no room for complacency it was pleasing that the overall number of complaints remained low, which suggested that the need for good standards of behaviour was being taken seriously locally.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Standards Committee was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 9 October 2018 at 6.15pm in Committee Room 1.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Iram Malik - Democratic Services Officer
Julie Openshaw - District Solicitor