

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Tuesday, 29 September 2015

Attendance list at the end of the document

The meeting started at 10.00am and ended at 10.30am

- *1 Public speaking
There were no questions asked.
- *2 Minutes
The minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 20 January 2015 were confirmed and signed as a true record. The Chairman welcomed the Committee and others present and invited everyone to introduce themselves.
- *3 Declarations of interest
There were none.
- *4 Annual report 2014/15
Members considered the review of the work of the Standards Committee during 2014/15, which outlined:
 - the key areas of work for committee members
 - the standards training
 - local review of our processes since the Localism Act 2011 changes
 - analysis of Code of Conduct complaints.

In response to a question from a member, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that a report on the Review of Public Speaking Arrangements was on the Forward Plan for the Standards Committee meeting on 26 January 2016, when the Service Lead – Planning would be invited to attend to.

It was noted that there was still future work required on the wording in the Code of Practice on planning matters, in respect of lobbying. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that this would be brought back to the Committee for its consideration at their January meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Monitoring Officer for his report.

RESOLVED: that the review of the 2014/15 year be noted.

- *5 Complaint update
The Committee considered and noted the report of the Monitoring Officer, which provided an update for the Committee on new Code related cases received since 1 May 2015. Members noted that there was one Sub Committee hearing to be arranged in the near future which it was suggested that new members may wish to attend to better understand the process and what to expect when asked to sit on Hearings Sub Committee.

RESOLVED:

that more detail be included in respect of the complaint outcomes in future complaint update reports to the Committee to enable Members to understand why a particular outcome had arisen.

*6 Update on Member Welcome/Refresher Programme

The Democratic Services Manager presented a report on the Member Welcome Programme, which updated members of the Standards Committee on its on-going delivery following the May 2015 elections and noted the review processes in place.

In response to a request for any additional information/learning that should be provided in the January 2016-onwards Forward Programme for Member Development, Committee Members requested that consideration should be given to include a non-Councillor member of Standards Committee to inform and contribute within a Code/Standards learning session. The Democratic Services Manager reported that additional standards training could be added to the post January 2016 Member Development Programme.

In response to a question regarding Member appraisals for existing Councillors, the Democratic Services Manager reported that she was in the process of undertaking personal development review appraisals for Councillors elected in May 2015. When these had been completed, she would invite longer standing Councillors to attend a review. A Member Development Working Party would be held in November to which Standards Committee members were invited to attend.

Members wished to thank Democratic Services for their hard work in preparing and delivering the Member Development programme.

RESOLVED:

1. that the 6-month member welcome/refresher programme be noted (including the opportunities provided in respect of Code of Conduct and Standards);
2. that members of the Standards Committee be invited to a meeting of the Member Development Working Group meeting in November when feedback from the councillor questionnaire on the programme would be considered;
3. that an independent or parish co-opted member of the Standards Committee be invited to help deliver a Code of Conduct session for councillors and local council representatives in early 2016.

* 7 Update on Officer roles and membership of the Committee

The Committee considered the report of the Monitoring Officer, which advised that certain co-opted members of the Committee would not be able to remain on the Committee after May 2016 and to seek the Committee's approval to commence recruitment for their replacement. The Monitoring Officer explained the process for recruitment and confirmed that the Interviewing Panel would consist of himself and the Chairman with possibly one other additional member of the Committee,. The Monitoring Officer advised that the Deputy Monitoring Officer was now in post and that both positions were there to advise Members on standards related issues.

The Chairman wished to thank Mr Ray Davison and Councillor Courtney Richards for their contribution to the work of the Standards Committee over the last 8 years.

RESOLVED:

1. that it be noted that one of the independent members and one of the town/ parish representatives will not be able to sit on the Committee after May 2016;
2. that authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to commence and progress the recruitment process for their replacement;
3. that it be noted that the Deputy Monitoring Officer role is carried out by the Principal Solicitor.

*8 Forward Plan

The Committee noted the contents of the forward plan and future meeting dates.

The following items would be included for consideration at January's meeting:

- Whistleblowing policy
- Revised wording on lobbying in the Code of Practice on planning matters
- Review of public speaking arrangements and how the lobbying advice in the Code of Practice on planning matters works in practice
- Review of Code of conduct complaints procedure
- Complaints update
- Forward Plan

The following items would be included for consideration at March's meeting:

- Recording councillor attendance at meetings
- Review of the following:
 - Employee Code of Conduct
 - Relationship between officers and member protocol
- Complaints update
- Forward Plan.

Attendance list

Present:

Councillors:

Stuart Hughes (Chairman)

Graham Godbeer

Douglas Hull

Dawn Manley

Pauline Stott

Co-opted non-voting members:

Cllr Courtney Richards, Co-opted Parish/Town Council member

Ray Davison, Co-opted Independent member

David Mason, Co-opted Parish/Town Council member

Also present:

Alison Willan, Independent Person

Councillors:

Susie Bond – substitute Committee member

Roger Giles

Tom Wright

Officers:

Henry Gordon Lennox, Monitoring Officer and Strategic Lead - Legal, Licensing & Democratic Services

Anita Williams, Deputy Monitoring Officer and Principal Solicitor

Diana Vernon, Democratic Services Manager
Chris Lane, Democratic Services Officer
Wendy Harris, PA to Strategic Lead Legal & Monitoring Officer

Apologies:

Cllr Alan Dent – substitute Committee member
Tim Swarbrick, Co-opted Independent member
John Walpole, Independent Person

Chairman Date