

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Tuesday, 14 August 2018

Attendance list at the end of the document

The meeting started at 10.00am and ended at 10.45am

- *1 Public speaking
There were no questions asked.
- *2 Minutes
The minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 23 January 2018, were confirmed and signed as a true record. With regard to the online Gifts & Hospitality Register, it was noted that changes still had to be made through Democratic Services and that a new online system was being investigated which would enable Councillors to add their Gifts & Hospitalities online themselves.
- *3 Declarations of interest
There were none.
- *4 Annual Report 2017-18
The Committee considered the report of the Monitoring Officer, which reviewed the 2017/18 year in the life of the Standards Committee and outlined the work done.

Discussion included the following points:

- The briefing note on starred or unstarred minutes had been written but not yet signed off due to officer workload;
- The recruitment process for the vacant parish council representative had started and it was anticipated that interviews for those on the shortlist would be held in September;
- The number of complaints had increased, but this was due to particular problems at one Town Council;
- There had been Code of Conduct training made available to both district and town/parish councillors. Following the next election all district councillors must have compulsory Code of Conduct training before they would be allowed to sit on Committees;
- The Committee considered what steps would be required to improve training for both district and parish councillors

The Chairman thanked the Monitoring Officer for his report.

RESOLVED: that the review of the 2017/18 year be noted;

- *5 Code of Conduct Complaints 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 2018.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

*6 Forward Plan

Committee members were asked to advise of any items for the Forward Plan.

Discussion included the following points:

- Possibility of getting town/parish councils more involved in Code of Conduct training;
- Monitoring Officer to attend the Annual Meeting with Town Clerks to update them on the Code of Conduct;
- Recording meetings would be a positive step forward for all town/parish councils as this could help improve behaviour and also provide a record of what was said for local council clerks to use.
- It was acknowledged that some of the smaller parish councils could be concerned about the cost of recording equipment, but the cost had reduced significantly and could be done on a laptop and not necessarily added to the website.

Councillor Susie Bond raised the issue of the Register of Land Interests and that she had found some inconsistencies amongst Councillors entries in this. She asked whether a note could be added to the Register saying that Councillors needed to provide full details of their land interests. It was noted that full details of political party membership also needed to be added. The Monitoring Officer agreed to provide a guidance note to go with the Register of Interests.

RESOLVED: 1. that the Monitoring Officer provide a report to the next meeting on how engagement on the Code of Conduct within the town/parish councils (both in terms of training and general understanding) can be improved and this be added to the Forward Plan;
2. that the Monitoring Officer provide a guidance note to go with the Councillors Register of Interests to highlight what Councillors should include in the Register.

Attendance list

Present:

Councillors:

Andrew Moulding (Chairman)

Susie Bond

Graham Godbeer

Douglas Hull

Stuart Hughes

Co-opted non-voting members:

Martin Goscomb, Co-opted Independent member

Tim Swarbrick, Co-opted Independent member

Frances Newth, Co-opted Parish/Town Council member

Also present:

Alison Willan, Independent Person

Councillors:

Dawn Manley – substitute Committee member

Roger Giles

Officers:

Henry Gordon Lennox, Monitoring Officer and Strategic Lead – Governance & Licensing
Chris Lane, Democratic Services Officer

Chairman Date