

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Tuesday, 26 January 2016

Attendance list at the end of the document

The meeting started at 10.00am and ended at 10.45am

*9 Public speaking

There were no questions asked.

*10 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 29 September 2015 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

*11 Declarations of interest

There were none.

12 Whistleblowing Policy Review

Members noted that the Council's Whistleblowing Policy required updating to reflect a change in the law; it had also been given an overall review. The revised policy was presented to the Committee with a recommendation that it was referred to Audit & Governance Committee for adoption.

RECOMMENDED: that the revised Whistleblowing Policy be recommended to Audit & Governance Committee for adoption.

*13 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.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

*14 Review of Code of Conduct for Employees and Relationship between Officers and Member Protocol

The Strategic Lead Legal, Licensing and Democratic Services (and Monitoring Officer) presented a report on the Review of Code of Conduct for Employees and Relationship between Officers and Member Protocol.

Members noted that the Council regularly reviews the policies, codes and procedures that govern the way it operates. The report focused on two such documents, being (1) the Code of Conduct for Employees, and (2) Relationship between Officers and Member Protocol. As both of these documents formed part of the Council's Constitution they can only be amended, if required, by Full Council.

The Code of Conduct for Employees governs how staff must conduct themselves when working for the Council. It was a condition of employment that staff adhere to this Code. The Code was updated relatively recently to include reference to 'not acting as an agent for people pursuing planning matters within the Council's area', but otherwise has remained unchanged for a period of time. There have been no

reported issues, which would suggest that the Code was defective or ineffective at this time.

The Relationship between Officers and Member Protocol governs the way Members and Officers interact when carrying out their respective roles and governs a fairly wide range of topics. As with the Code of Conduct for Employees there have been no reported issues or incidents that would suggest that this protocol is ineffective or defective at this time.

There had not been any national changes (legislation or guidance) that would necessitate any changes being made to either the Code or Protocol. Accordingly, the recommendation was that the Code and Protocol be agreed as fit for purpose and left unchanged.

RESOLVED:

that the Code of Conduct for Employees and the Relationship between Officers and Members protocols are considered fit for purpose; no changes need to be recommended.

* 15 Review of Public Speaking Arrangements

The Committee considered the report of the Monitoring Officer, which reviewed the public speaking arrangements introduced to Development Management Committee in October 2014. The arrangements were being trialed in order to try to address the length of meetings and the waiting time experienced by representatives wishing to speak on an item.

A member requested that further information be provided in the report to Development Management Committee on review of public speaking arrangements on the length of previous Committee meetings.

RESOLVED:

that the success of the trial be acknowledged and it be recommended that the public speaking arrangements be continued unchanged for a further year (to see whether the new Local Plan adoption had an effect on the number of applications referred to the Committee) but with a view to permanent adoption thereafter if the arrangements continue to be fit for purpose. .

16 Review of Code of Conduct of Complaints Procedures

The Committee consider the report of the Monitoring Officer which reviewed the Code of Conduct procedures and considered whether any changes were required.

RECOMMENDED:

that there be no change to the Councillor Complaint Procedure, but that the revised Sub Committee Hearing Procedure be adopted.

*17 Forward Plan

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

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

- Review of Code of Practice on planning matters and lobbying.
- Recording of councillor attendance at meetings
- Complaints update
- Forward Plan.

First Committee post 1 May 2016:

- Annual report
- 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

Cllr David Mason, Co-opted Parish/Town Council member

Also present:

Alison Willan, Independent Person

Councillors:

Susie Bond – substitute Committee member

Roger Giles

Alan Dent – substitute Committee member

Officers:

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

Anita Williams, Deputy Monitoring Officer and Principal Solicitor

Chris Lane, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies:

Tim Swarbrick, Co-opted Independent member

John Walpole, Independent Person

Chairman Date