

STANDARDS

Committee

16th July 2012

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Pat Witherspoon (Chair), Councillor Michael Braley (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Phil Mould, Debbie Taylor and Derek Taylor

Also Present:

Fiona Hawker, Feckenham Parish Council Representative (Co-opted non-voting member)

Officers:

C Felton and C Flanagan

Democratic Services Officer:

D Parker-Jones

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the final meeting of the former Standards Committee held on 26th March 2012 were submitted.

The Democratic Services Officer advised that Deborah Andrews, Independent Member Chair of the former Standards Committee, had been forwarded a set of the draft minutes prior to ceasing in her role and had confirmed these as being a correct record.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 26th March 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

4. MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT

The Committee received a report from the Monitoring Officer (MO) outlining the current position in relation to a number of key issues linked to the new standards regime, which had come into force on 1st July 2012, and on Member training matters.

The MO advised that the final interviews for the role of Independent Persons under the new regime were due to take place on Friday 20th July, with a total of five candidates being interviewed for the two posts in question.

Fiona Hawker, Feckenham Parish Council Representative, was welcomed to the meeting. The MO advised Ms Hawker that should the Parish Council ever wish for a substitute to attend in her place then they were welcome to do so, and that any such substitute could observe meetings of the Committee as they so wished. It was also noted that a Parish Council Representative Report item would be included on future agendas should there be anything that either Ms Hawker or her substitute wish to update the Committee on. Ms Hawker noted the position and agreed to advise the Parish Council accordingly.

The MO referred to the three Code of Conduct training sessions which had taken place in June and which had been attended by some Members. She asked the members of the Committee to liaise with their group Members and to advise her if it was felt that additional future training was required on this.

RESOLVED that

the report of the Monitoring Officer be noted.

5. LOCALISM ACT 2011 - NEW STANDARDS REGIME - MANAGING COMPLAINTS

The Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) introduced a report which set out proposals for the appointment of sub-committees of the Standards Committee, which were required under the arrangements for managing standards complaints against elected and co-opted Members.

It was noted that there was a discrepancy in the composition of Sub-Committee 6 at Appendix 1 to the report, with Councillor Derek Taylor being listed twice under the membership thereof, and which the DMO stated should also have stated Councillor Debbie Taylor in its membership.

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RESOLVED that

- 1) the Standards Committee appoints (i) Assessment Sub-Committees to determine whether a complaint against a Member/co-opted Member merits formal investigation and (ii) a Hearings Sub-Committee to consider a complaint referred by the Monitoring Officer, following an investigation; and
- 2) subject to an amendment to the membership of Sub-Committee 6 as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report to include Councillor Debbie Taylor, the Sub-Committees of the Standards Committee as set out in Appendix 1 be established.

6. PUBLICATIONS

There were no publications to consider.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the future Work Programme of the Committee.

It was agreed that both the number and dates of future meetings should remain as detailed in the report, and that meetings be cancelled where there was insufficient business to be conducted. In view of the small size of the Committee it was also suggested that, where possible, should an external booking be sought on pre-arranged meeting nights and subject to the likely business under consideration and possible numbers of Members and other parties in attendance, meetings take place in Committee Room 1.

Officers advised that the meeting scheduled for 8th October 2012 would proceed and that this would consider a report on the processes and procedures involved for both Member complaint investigations the Hearings Sub-Committee.

Regarding the Member-Officer and Member-Member Protocols detailed under the 'Date to be confirmed' section of the Work Programme, the Monitoring Officer advised that these had not been reviewed for a long time and that it might therefore be useful for these to first be considered by the Constitution Review Working Party, for additional Member involvement, prior to any Standards Committee input. Members agreed with this proposal and noted that full Member 'buy-in' would be necessary in order for the Protocols to work.

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RESOLVED that

**subject to the comments detailed in the preamble above, the
Work Programme be approved.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 7.17 pm