

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY, 27 MARCH 2018**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Dave Wood (Chair), Steve Weisinger (Vice-Chair), Kevin Parry, Eric Shaw, Tim Swinyard and Vera Tomlinson, Messrs Mick Compton, Trevor Davies, Richards Hailstone and Keith Strickland.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jane Milner-Barry, Teresa Page and Joe Tray, Messrs David Dawson and Paul Morris.

### **24. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

### **25. Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2018 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **26. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

### **27. Exempt Items - Exclusion of Press and Public**

Resolved - That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the discussion of the matters referred to in the items listed below on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the respective paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

<u>Item No.</u>	<u>Paragraph Nos.</u>	<u>Minute No.</u>
7	1 and 2	29

### **28. Ethical Framework Update**

The Committee considered a report from the Deputy Monitoring Officer which provided an update on the following matters relating to the Ethical Framework and issues of probity in the Council.

#### Dispensations

The Committee noted that no dispensations had been requested by Councillors since the last meeting.

#### Summary of Code of Conduct Complaints

The Committee noted the summary of Code of Conduct complaints, set out in

paragraph 3.5 of the report, and received a brief update on the increased number of complaints received during the current Municipal Year.

It was also noted that an Assessment Panel had been held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2018 to consider eight complaints but that, as the outcomes had not yet been communicated to the respective complainants and respondents, the details of those complaints would be reported to the next meeting of this Committee.

#### Member Training

The Committee noted the details of the training and development events that had taken place during the current Municipal Year, including details of both Borough and Parish Councillor attendance at those events, attached at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to the report. It was also noted that work is progressing on the Induction Programme and Member Training and Development Programme for the 2018/2019 Municipal Year, as agreed by the Member Development Advisory Group at its meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2018, the details of which will be reported to this Committee at future meetings.

The Committee noted that the Monitoring Officer had conducted training sessions throughout the previous year for Parish Councillors on the Code of Conduct, Chairing Skills, and decision-making, the details of which were set out in Appendix 3. The details of other training arranged by Parish Clerks for their respective councils during the year was also noted.

#### Membership of the Independent Remuneration Panel

The Committee noted that the four year period of Mr John Dernie's appointment to the Panel as the Business Sector Representative ends in April 2018. It was also noted that, since there is no restriction on the re-appointment of members, Mr Dernie had been approached with a view to him continuing to serve on the Panel, and that he had advised that he was willing to do so.

#### Membership of the Standards Committee – Independent Persons

The Committee noted that the period of office of the Council's two Independent Persons would expire in May 2018 and that, in response to the advertising of the vacancies, fourteen applications had been received. In accordance with the Council's process, these had been circulated to the Group Leaders for their comments in order to begin the shortlisting process.

The Committee noted that interviews for the positions will take place in the week commencing 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2018, with the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer forming the interview panel, and that the Monitoring Officer will recommend the appointment of the Independent Persons to the Annual Meeting of the Council on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2018.

#### Local government ethical standards: stakeholder consultation

The Committee was advised that, on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2018, the Committee on Standards in Public Life had published a consultation paper to inform its review of local government ethical standards.

The Committee noted the following terms of reference for the review:

- To examine the structures, processes and practices in local government in England for:
  - maintaining codes of conduct for local councillors.
  - investigating alleged breaches fairly and with due process.
  - enforcing codes and imposing sanctions for misconduct.
  - declaring interests and managing conflicts of interest.
  - Whistleblowing.
- To assess whether the existing structures, processes and practices are conducive to high standards of conduct in local government.
- To make any recommendations for how they can be improved.
- To note any evidence of intimidation of councillors, and make recommendations for any measures that could be put in place to prevent and address such intimidation.

In considering this item, the Committee worked through the questions set out in Appendix 4 to the report. The Committee agreed that a draft response to the consultation on behalf of the Committee be created and circulated electronically to members for approval prior to final submission by the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2018.

Resolved – (1) That the Ethical Framework Update, including dispensations granted to members of the Borough Council, the Summary of Code of Conduct complaints, the latest position regarding member training and development within the Borough, and the latest position regarding the recruitment of the Independent Persons be noted.

(2) That, in view of his experience and commitment, the continued appointment of Mr John Dernie to the Independent Remuneration Panel, as the Business Sector representative, be approved.

(3) That the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to submit a response to the local government ethical standards stakeholder consultation on behalf of the Committee, the draft of which to be circulated electronically to members for approval prior to final submission by the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2018.

## **29. Ethical Compliance Report**

The Committee considered a report regarding the outcome of various ethical compliance matters, including the details of any Whistleblowing cases, Code of Conduct Complaints, and breaches of the Member / Officer Protocol received since the last Committee, and the outcome of any completed investigations in relation to these. The Committee noted that anonymous allegations are given as much equal weighting as to others received, though outcomes may be affected if further information is required which cannot be provided.

Resolved – That the Ethical Compliance Report be noted.