

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 2 MARCH 2015**

PRESENT:- Councillors David Wood (Chair), Michael Bray, Fay Howard, Kevin Parry, Carol Shelley, Eric Shaw and Vera Tomlinson and Joe Tray. Messrs Paul Morris, Trevor Davies, David Dawson, Richard Hailstone and Mike Compton

Apologies for absence were received from Keith Strickland.

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

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

Councillor Vera Tomlinson made prejudicial declaration of interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 7 ("Appeal against decision to invoke vexatious complainant policy"), on the basis that parties to the matter were known to her and that, in her capacity as a Borough Councillor, she was involved in other matters relating to the the complainant referred to in the report.

Mr Mike Compton, a Parish representative, made non-prejudicial declaration of interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 7 ("Appeal against decision to invoke vexatious complainant policy"), on the basis that several of the parties to the matter were known to him, in his capacity as a Parish Councillor.

### **25. Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015 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 they involved 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 Nos.</u>
7 and 8	1 and 2	29 and 30

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

The Committee received a report from the Director of Law and Democratic Services providing an update on matters relating to the Ethical Framework, including:

- Dispensations.
- A summary of Code of Conduct complaints received during the 2014/15 Municipal Year.
- Training.
- The Council's Working from Home policy.
- The Council's standards arrangements.
- The Council's Annual Governance Statement.

Resolved – (1) That the Ethical Framework update be noted.

(2) That, with regard to members' concerns about the potential for abuse of the Council's Working From Home policy, the Head of People and Development be asked to issue best practice guidance to all service areas. That the existing guidance be revised, where practicable, to accord with the guidance for staff document utilised by Law and Democratic Services (attached to the report at Appendix 4), which the Committee commends as successfully addressing members' concerns about the Working From Home policy.

(3) That, with reference to the "Arrangements for dealing with Member Code of Conduct complaints", in cases where a complaint is made by a Borough Councillor against a fellow Councillor, the Monitoring Officer be asked to revise the process to facilitate formal consultation with the Political Groups and the Councillors concerned, to establish if an informal resolution might be achieved.

(4) That the process for the preparation of the Council's Annual Governance Statement, as set in Appendix 8 to the report, be agreed.

## **29. Appeal against Decision to Invoke Vexatious Complainant Policy**

The Committee received a report asking members to consider an appeal against a decision to designate a complainant as vexatious. It was noted that, in accordance with the Council's "Persistent and Vexatious Complaints Procedure", contained within the Corporate Customer Feedback Policy (Section 3.8 refers), the customer had a right of appeal to the Standards Committee.

Resolved – That the decision to invoke the Council's vexatious complainant policy and designate this complainant as vexatious, be upheld and that this decision remain in place until the review scheduled for November 2015.

(Councillor Vera Tomlinson made prejudicial declaration of interest in relation to this item, on the basis that parties to the matter were known to her and that, in her capacity as a Borough Councillor, she was involved in other matters relating to the complainant referred to in the report. Councillor Tomlinson left the room for the Committee's consideration of this matter and took no part in the debate of the matter.)

## **30. Ethical Compliance Report**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services regarding the outcome of various ethical framework compliance matters, including the details of Whistleblowing cases, breaches of the member/officer relations protocol and Code of Conduct Complaints received since the last Committee and the outcome of any completed investigations in relation to these.

Resolved – That the Ethical Framework Compliance report be noted.