

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2013

PRESENT:- Councillor David Wood (Chair), Councillor Fay Howard, Councillor Teresa Page, Mr Trevor Davies, Mr Mike Compton, Mr Richard Hailstone, Councillor Brian Ford and Councillor Toby Elliott (Deputy)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rod Bluh and Mick Bray and Mr. Paul Morris.

11. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

12. Minutes

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2013 be confirmed and signed.

13. Public Question Time

Ms Karen Boyd, a resident of Hesketh Crescent, Swindon, put questions regarding:

- the Council's process for dealing with complaints against officers
- the consequences of the failure of members or officers to comply with governance guidelines
- the maximum sanctions against members or officers in the event of a breach of the Code of Conduct.

The Chair advised Ms Boyd that written responses would be provided to her questions.

Ms Carole Bent, a resident of Old Town, Swindon, put questions regarding

- the Committee's perception of public confidence in the Council's complaints procedure
- the distribution to members of the Standards Committee of her correspondence with officers and the Chair on the issue of the Council's standards procedures and its practice in relation to the recording of public questions in the minutes of meetings
- the timeframe for the Committee's review of the Council's standards procedures

The Chair responded to Ms Bent's questions.

Mr Arthur Beltrami, a resident of Spencer Close, Swindon, put a question regarding support available to members of the public in submitting Code of Conduct complaints. At the Chair's invitation, the Director of Law and Democratic Services responded to Mr Beltrami's question.

Ms Claire Bouverie-Brine, a local resident, asked about the process for re-opening a complaint she had previously made about a member of the Council, in the light of what she saw as new evidence. The Chair advised Ms Bouverie-Brine that she would be provided with a written response to her question. The Chair, with the assistance of the Director of Law and Democratic Services, also responded to further questions put by Ms Bouverie-Brine regarding:

- her right of challenge in the event that she felt the answer to her initial question to be unsatisfactory
- support available to members of the public in submitting Code of Conduct complaints

14. Exempt Items - Exclusion of Press and Public

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 involve 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 No.</u>	<u>Minute No.</u>
7	1 and 2	16

15. 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:

- a reference from the Council's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- dispensations
- the Independent Persons Protocol
- the membership of the Standards Committee
- updates to codes and protocols
- the Council's updated Ethical Audit Self-Assessment
- the Department for Communities and Local Government's revised Plain English Guide for Councillors; and
- training issues.

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

(2) That the Independent Persons Protocol, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted.

(3) That the Ethical Audit Desktop Analysis, attached at Appendix 2 to the report, be endorsed.

16. 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 received since the last Committee and the outcome of any completed investigations in relation to these, the whistleblowing protocol and the sources of allegations over the past few years, and the details of

Code of Conduct Complaints received since the last meeting.

Resolved – That the Ethical Framework Compliance report be noted.

Signed at a meeting of the Committee held on 27 January 2014

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Person presiding at meeting at which minutes signed