

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 21 JULY 2014**

PRESENT:- Councillors Michael Bray (Vice-Chair), Fay Howard, Eric Shaw, Kevin Small, Vera Tomlinson, Joe Tray and Maureen Penny and Mr Keith Strickland, Mr Paul Morris, Mr Trevor Davies, Mr David Dawson, Mr Richard Hailstone and Mr Mike Compton.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Wood, Councillor Kevin Parry and Councillor Carol Shelley.

### **1. 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.

### **2. Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **3. Public Question Time**

Carole Bent, a local resident, referred to the public engagement in the review of the Council's Standards arrangements and asked whether member's had found that engagement to be constructive and helpful. The Chair and Councillor Fay Howard responded on behalf of the Committee, advising that the input to the review received from members of the public had been both informative and very helpful.

### **4. 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 item listed below on the grounds that it 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 No.</u>
10	1 and 2	9

### **5. Standards Committee Annual Report 2013/14**

The Committee was asked to consider its Draft Annual Report 2013/14, which document provided a record of the work of the Standards Committee for the period June 2013 to May 2014. In particular, the Committee's view was sought on a suggestion put forward as part of the review of the Council's standards arrangements that a summary of Code of Conduct complaints received during the

Municipal Year be made to each future meeting of the Standards Committee as part of the ethical framework update.

Resolved – (1) That the Draft Standards Committee Annual Report 2013/14 be agreed, subject to the correction of the minor textual errors in the document identified by members during their consideration of the report.

(2) That a current summary of Code of Conduct complaints received during the Municipal Year be made to each future meeting of the Standards Committee as part of the ethical framework update.

## **6. Annual Work Programme**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services inviting the Committee to agree its Work Programme for 2014/2015.

Resolved – That the Committee's draft Work Programme for 2014/2015, as appended to the report, be agreed.

## **7. Review of the Council's Standards Arrangements**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services on the review of the Council's current "Arrangements for dealing with member Code of Conduct Complaints" and inviting the Committee to review the Council's current arrangements, taking into account the discussions at previous meetings and subsequent round tables with a small group of interested residents, and to make any changes it felt would enable complaints to be dealt with more expeditiously in terms of process.

Resolved – (1) That the members of the public and representatives of stakeholder groups who had attended previous meetings of the Standards Committee, and the subsequent round tables, be thanked for their interest and for their constructive and helpful comments on the Council's existing standards arrangements.

(2) That it be noted that the reference in the covering report to "local residents" consulted as part of the review process, included two individuals who attended as representatives of Chiseldon Parish Council.

(3) That, with reference to the summary of the main issues identified at the two round tables (appended to the report), the following be agreed:

- the initial assessment of complaints to continue to be determined by a Panel of councillors with an Independent Person and Lay/Parish Representatives where appropriate
- Assessment Panel meetings continue to be convened on an ad hoc basis
- proceedings at the initial stage of the complaint to remain private and confidential
- neither the complainant or the respondent to be allowed to attend Assessment Panel meetings but both to be advised as soon as possible of the date when the Assessment Panel will meet to consider the complaint
- a summary of Code of Conduct complaints received during the Municipal Year be made to each future meeting of the Standards Committee as part of the ethical framework update
- the current practice of no right to appeal Assessment Panel decisions be continued and that this issue be further considered as part of the scheduled review of the process in March 2015
- members be encouraged to make themselves available to attend Assessment Panel meetings so as to enable the completion of the initial

assessment of a complaint within a period of one calendar month from receipt of the complaint.

(4) That, with regard to the suggestion that the membership of the Standards Committee should be increased to facilitate a greater pool of members that can be drawn upon for Assessment Panel meetings, to assist in avoiding any unnecessary delay in this initial phase of the process, it be noted that the membership of the Standards Committee was increased at the Annual Council Meeting in June 2014 (*from 6 to 9 councillors*).

(5) That the Council document "Arrangements for dealing with Member Code of Conduct complaints", be amended to incorporate the textual changes agreed by the Committee (as set out in the tracked change document at Appendix 1 to these minutes).

(6) That the issue confidentiality of proceedings, particularly in relation to the respondent's position and the enforcement of confidentiality of proceedings, be further considered as part of the Standards Committee's annual review of the process in March 2015.

## **8. 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
- the membership of the Standards Committee
- the Annual Governance Statement (and the specific reference therein to the Council's arrangements for promoting and upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour)
- training issues
- the completion by newly elected or re-elected members to the Council of Register of Interests declarations
- the regional workshop on the role of the Independent Persons.

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

(2) That it be noted that no dispensations had been granted by the Monitoring Officer since the last meeting.

(3) That the issues reported in relation to member and Parish Councillor training be noted.

(4) That the two Independent Persons, together with the Director of Law and Democratic Services, attend Hoey Ainscough's workshop on the role of the Independent Person, to be held at the Civic Offices on Thursday 23 October 2014 and that the Chair and/or Vice-Chair be invited to attend the workshop in the event that either of the Independent Persons is unable to attend the workshop.

## **9. 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 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.