
Standards Committee

Report of the meeting held on 26th June 2014

Matters for Information

1. STANDARDS UPDATE

The Committee was informed of the response of the Council and the Corporate Governance Panel to the series of recommendations made at the last meeting in respect of changes to the Code of Conduct, membership of the Committee and its terms of reference. The Committee also has been apprised of the nature and action taken in response to complaints recently received by the Monitoring Officer and, although very early in the process, the position thus far in respect of the adoption of the new HDC Code by Parish Councils and the return of Disposable Pecuniary Interests forms made necessary by the adoption of a new Code.

Since adoption of a new Code by the Council, the Committee noted that the Monitoring Officer had –

- issued a new Code of Conduct and advised all Parish Councils who previously had adopted the HDC Code to adopt the new Code of Conduct at its first available meeting in the new municipal year;
- revised the declaration of interests form to include the new category of 'Non-Statutory Disclosable Interests' relating to bodies exercising functions of a public nature, those directed towards charitable purposes and those whose principal purposes included the influence of public opinion or policy;
- issued revised forms to all District and relevant Parish Councillors to complete; and
- updated the Briefing Note for Members and Frequently Asked Questions advice and included this on the updated 'Standards & Conduct' pages on the District Council's website.

Given the value of continuity, Members were pleased to note that the Independent Members and Parish Council representatives would continue to serve on the Committee until 30th April 2016. The Committee also looked forward to managing its extended workload which now would include complaints and matters relating to elections.

Having been made aware that Colin Meadowcroft, the Council's Monitoring Officer was to retire on 31st July, Members extended their

appreciation to him for his hard work in helping the Committee maintain and monitor ethical standards over the years.

2. REQUEST FOR DISPENSATION

Section 33(1) of the Localism Act 2011 states that 'a relevant authority may, on a written request made to the proper officer of the authority by a member or co opted member of the authority, grant a dispensation relieving the member or co opted member from either or both of the restrictions in section 31(4) in cases described in the dispensation'. Section 31(4) of the Act indicates that a Member with a DPI may not participate in discussion nor vote on a matter at a meeting unless a dispensation has been granted to enable that Member to do so.

The Committee considered a request for a dispensation from District Councillor Mrs P A Jordan. Councillor Mrs Jordan is required to declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest by virtue of her employment with the National Health Service and is precluded from taking part in discussion when business relating to her employer arises at meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Social Well Being).

After careful consideration, the Committee agreed to grant Councillor Mrs Jordan a dispensation to speak and vote on matters coming before the Scrutiny Panel connected with NHS issues other than those affecting her own personal terms and conditions of employment and matters associated with NHS Community Services which impact upon her directly as an employee. The dispensation will expire on 30th April 2015, at the end of Councillor Mrs Jordan's term of office.

3. STANDARDS CASES

For information and partly for training purposes, the Committee has noted the outcome and methodology used in three cases involving alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct which had occurred in various authorities nationwide.

A Hansard
Chairman