

MINUTES OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE Thursday, 7 December 2017

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Linda Woollard (Chair), Carol Chisholm (Vice-Chair), Bill Evans, Susan Jones and Barrie Yates

INDEPENDENT PERSON: Barry Parsonage

OFFICERS: Caroline Elwood (Interim Corporate Governance Manager), Andy Houlker (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Dave Whelan (Legal Services Manager/Monitoring Officer)

OTHER MEMBERS AND OFFICERS: 0

PUBLIC: 0

15 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Coulton and David Haley (Independent Person).

16 Minutes of the Last Meeting

RESOLVED (Unanimously):

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 September 2017 be approved as a correct record.

17 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

18 Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee Initial Assessment Hearing Panel

RESOLVED (Unanimously by those members of the Panel present):

That the minutes of the meeting of the Initial Hearing Panel held on 21 November 2017 be approved as a correct record.

19 Annual Report and Update

The Council's Monitoring Officer presented the Annual Report on work carried out over the last 12 months. This had been a busy and productive year and included; the appointment of a second Independent Person to assist the Monitoring Officer, the development of a Social Media Protocol, amending/updating the Hearing and

Investigation Procedure for Dealing with Complaints, reviewing the Code of Conduct for Elected Members and the development of Guidance relating to it.

It had also been a busy year for dealing with complaints against members under the Code of Conduct for Elected Members.

As well as reporting on all of the above information was also provided as to complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman, and Members' attendance figures.

Looking forward it was suggested there be specific training for Committee members sitting on Standard Committee Hearing Panels as well as general standards training/awareness raising for all members. The Committee also felt it would be helpful to have a joint workshop with other neighbouring councils (such as Chorley Borough Council, Lancashire County Council and Preston City Council) to discuss/air current issues and approaches.

RESOLVED (Unanimously) that:

- (1) the Annual Report be noted and be presented to a future meeting of the Council; and
- (2) the Monitoring Officer approach Chorley Borough Council, Lancashire County Council and Preston City Council with a view to holding a joint Standards workshop (possibly held at County Hall).

20 Disqualification Criteria for Councillors

The Interim Corporate Governance Manager reported that the Council had been consulted by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on possible additional criteria for the disqualification of Councillors and Elected Mayors.

The Committee was asked whether or not it supported the DCLG's proposal to introduce a new rule that would prohibit any individual subject to an Anti-Social Behaviour Injunction, a Criminal Behaviour Order or had been added to the sex offenders' register, from standing for election or holding office as a Councillor and Elected Mayor.

The DCLG's consultation paper was appended to the report.

In particular the Committee was asked to consider and respond to the six questions in the report. The Committee considered and discussed each question in turn, especially Question 2. With the exception of the response to Question 2 (For: 4, Against: 1), the Committee was unanimous in its responses to the questions.

RESOLVED that the Council's responses to the six question in the DCLG's consultation be as follows:

1. Yes
2. No
3. Yes
4. Yes
5. No
6. No

21 Complaint Form for Complaints under the Code of Conduct

The Interim Corporate Governance Manager presented a proposed form to be used in connection with complaints received under the Code of Conduct.

It was felt that the form would consistently collect the necessary basic information and the need to complete a form might assist in reducing the number of such complaints being received.

RESOLVED:

That the Complaint Form attached as Appendix A to the report be used for future complaints under the Code of Conduct for Elected Members.

22 Protocol Relating to Independent Persons

The Interim Corporate Governance Manager presented the report that asked the Committee to look at the existing protocol for Independent Persons and amend as appropriate. This review had been included as part of the Committee's Work Programme. It was felt that the existing protocol was largely relevant and it was proposed to conduct a refresh rather than a full review.

The Council's two Independent Persons had been consulted and provided comments along with members of the Council. It was proposed that a refreshed protocol be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That a refresh of the Council's existing protocol for Independent Persons be carried out and that the amended protocol be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

Chair

Date