

SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Standards Committee

Meeting held at 6.00pm on Thursday 23 February 2017 in Oaks Room, Civic Centre, West Paddock, Leyland PR25 1DH

Present:-

Councillor Hesketh (in the chair)

Councillors Bird, Evans and Higgins

In Attendance:-

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

Public Attendance: - 0

Other Members and Officers: - Councillors Coulton, Ogilvie and P Smith

Minute No.	Description/Resolution
5	<p>Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs S Jones and the Independent Person - Mr Barry Parsonage.</p>
6	<p>Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest.</p>
7	<p>Minutes of the Last Meeting RESOLVED (unanimously) that: the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2016 be approved as a correct record.</p>
8	<p>Social Media Protocol for Members Following the committee's request (min. no.4(1), 8 December 2016 refers), a report was presented proposing a protocol for members on the use of social media. It was acknowledged that social media was here to stay and could be a useful tool and, with common sense caused no problems. However, there had been issues regarding social media and members and it was felt that the council needed to adopt a protocol on its use. The committee was reminded that the standards regime only applied to members in their councillor capacity not as a member of the public/resident, although, there were general legal considerations that could still apply such as copyright, harassment and libel.</p> <p>The main areas of the draft protocol were explained to the committee including tips to help members on some do's and don'ts. These were discussed including the appropriateness or not of the use of social media during council meetings. The committee was advised that training on the use of social media was planned for all council members and officers.</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimously) that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the draft Social Media Protocol for all members be approved; 2. the need for the Protocol to be considered and approved by the Governance Committee and full Council as part of the Council's Constitution be noted; and 3. it be recommended to Council that all members attend training on the effective use of social media.
9	<p>Progress Report Further to the last meeting held on 8 December 2016, the committee received an update on the development of a Member/ Officer Protocol, training and development and the creation of a work programme/ forward plan. The report also dealt with the dispensation for members to</p>

	<p>vote at Budget Council and consideration of an amended version of the committee's terms of reference. The latter was part of the Governance Committee's review of the council's Constitution. This was aimed to combine previous documents, simplify usage, increase readability, reduce duplication, remove items no longer relevant, and increase the use of links to make it easier to navigate/use the Constitution.</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimously) that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the position in relation to progress on a Member/ Officer Protocol and on training and development be noted; 2. the proposed work programme/ forward plan be agreed; 3. a dispensation be granted under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of voting on the setting of the Council Tax for the next 3 financial years as set out in the Council's Code of Conduct; and 4. the committee's draft amended Terms of Reference attached to the report at Appendix B be approved and submitted to the Governance Committee for recommendation to full Council.
10	<p>Code of Conduct for Elected Members – Review</p> <p>The committee was informed that compared to some local authorities, this council's Code of Conduct for Elected Members was very detailed and robust and had been adopted by parish councils and some neighbouring authorities. Therefore its review was not felt a priority. However, the general principles of public life required updating and it was felt members would benefit from more detailed guidance on the Code.</p> <p>In respect of a member disclosing information, the committee was advised that any member should first contact the Monitoring Officer to ensure that proper procedures were followed and that no breach of the law or of the council's Whistle Blowing Policy took place. There was a discussion around members previously annually indicating/signing up to the Code.</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimously) that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the provisions of the existing Code of Conduct at Appendix A of the report be noted; 2. the definitions of the general principles of public life at Section B of the Code of Conduct be updated as set out at Appendix B of the report; 3. to provide members with detailed assistance the guidance at Appendix C to the report be issued to accompany the Code of Conduct; and 4. the requirement for any amendments to the Code of Conduct to receive full Council approval be noted
11	<p>Appointment of Second Independent Person</p> <p>Further to min no.4(5), 8 December 2016, the committee considered a report on the recruitment of an additional Independent Person. As previously mentioned to the committee it would be beneficial for the council to have another Independent Person in dealing with investigations. This was particularly true if the Independent Person was involved in the early stages of a complaint it would be better to have a separate Independent Person later on. However, any appointment required a full recruitment process such as placing an advertisement etc.</p> <p>The committee was advised that under the current standards regime there was no longer a requirement to have a representative from parish councils on the Standards Committee. If the committee subsequently dealt with a parish council complaint, it could possibly co-opt a parish councillor on to the committee but without voting rights.</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimously) that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the appointment of an additional Independent Person be agreed; and 2. the process to be followed to recruit an additional Independent Person be noted.

..... Chairman