

SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Standards Committee

Meeting held at 6.00pm on Thursday 8 December 2016 in Oaks Room, Civic Centre, West Paddock, Leyland PR25 1DH

Present:-

Councillors Hesketh (in the chair)

Councillors Bird, Evans, Mrs S Jones and Wharton

Independent Person: Mr Barry Parsonage

In Attendance:-

Jean Hunter (Interim Chief Executive), David Whelan (Legal Services Manager) and Andy Houlker (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

Minute No.	Description/Resolution
1	<p>Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Higgins and Mrs Woollard.</p>
2	<p>Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest.</p>
3	<p>Minutes of the Last Meeting RESOLVED (unanimously) that: the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2015 be noted and signed by the chairman.</p>
4	<p>Annual Report and Update David Whelan (Legal Services Manager) addressed the committee, explaining the current standards regime and outlining activity on standards matters over the last 12 months. He also outlined the challenge for the next 12 months.</p> <p>The recent Scrutiny Committee Review of Licensing had made a couple of recommendations relevant to the work of the Standards Committee. These were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strengthening and enhancing its role to improve ethical governance and set a standard for both members and officers to follow, • and the development of a new member/officer protocol with political awareness training provided to members and officers. <p>It was clear the committee needed to meet more frequently, increase its profile and exert greater influence on member behaviour which would be assisted by the development of work programme.</p> <p>The committee was informed that the ethical audit peer review (as part of the scrutiny recommendations) was anticipated to take place in the second/third week of March 2017.</p> <p>It was emphasise that for the current standards regime to work it relied heavily on the support/co-operation of political group leaders/whips (sanctions). To put this into context the committee was informed about the previous regime. Whilst this had more powers it was bureaucratic and slow with overly prescriptive processes overseen by the Standards Board for England which central government had seen fit to abolish. It was acknowledged the regime needed to change but not necessarily with the removal of the sanctions which had undermined the effectiveness of the current regime. The current regime was introduced in 2012.</p>

The current regime had introduced the role of an Independent Person. This council currently only had one and it was felt appropriate to appoint a second Independent Person, especially if an Independent Person was involved in a complaint at an early stage. The council's current Independent Person (Barry Parsonage) was also appointed by Wyre BC. He had previously been the Director of Finance at Wyre BC.

It was confirmed that if felt appropriate, the committee could look at/review the council's Code of Conduct for Elected Members. There was then a discussion on social media following recent events and the need for the council to develop and introduce a protocol and also provide appropriate training for all members. The committee felt a draft protocol should be presented to the next meeting. The committee also felt that member training and development was also an area worth further study, in particular member attendance.

A suggested way to help raise the profile of the committee and its work and deliver messages to members was that the Chairman of the Standards Committee report to meetings of the council.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that:

1. a draft protocol on the use of social media (including training for all members) be prepared and presented to the next meeting of the committee on 23 February 2017;
2. the committee's terms of reference be reviewed at the next meeting of the committee on 23 February 2017;
3. the committee review the council's Code of Conduct for Elected Members at the next meeting of the committee on 23 February 2017;
4. that a new member/officer protocol be developed;
5. the council investigates into appointing a second Independent Person;
6. member attendance at training and development be explored; and
7. the creation of a Standards Committee forward plan/work programme be explored.

..... Chairman

The meeting finished at 6.40pm.