



NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE THURSDAY 20 JULY 2017

HELD AT 5.30PM IN
Council Chamber B, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West Bridgford

PRESENT:

Councillors R A Adair (Chairman), F A Purdue-Horan

Independent Members: J R Baggaley, G Norbury, K White, W A Wood

OFFICERS PRESENT:

Nigel Carter	Service Manager - Finance and Commercial and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Martin Elliott	Constitutional Services Team Leader
Glen O'Connell	Monitoring Officer

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillors M Buckle, E J Lungley

1. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Purdue-Horan declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4, Cases update 2016/17.

2. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The notes of the meeting held on Monday 27 June 2016 were accepted as a true record.

3. Cases update 2016/17

Councillor Purdue-Horan who had declared an interest in this item left the meeting at this point.

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report to update the Committee on the number of complaints regarding alleged breaches of the Councillor Code of Conduct received since July, 2016. The report also highlighted potential areas where training or education could assist Councillors' understanding of the Council's standards regime's requirements. It was noted by the Monitoring Officer that there had been no complaints submitted regarding Rushcliffe Borough Council Councillors in the last year.

It was AGREED that the report of the Monitoring Officer be noted.

4. Code of Conduct and Monitoring Officer issues for Town and Parish Councils

Councillor Purdue-Horan re-joined the meeting at this point.

The Monitoring Officer made a presentation to the Committee to provide an overview of Code of Conduct and Monitoring Officer issues for Town and Parish Councils.

The presentation provided information on:

- The Code of Conduct and its principles.
- The requirements of the Localism Act 2011 with regard to the registration of disclosable pecuniary interests by Councillors and how they impacted on the decisions involving Councillors.
- The difficulties of defining disclosable pecuniary interests when Town and Parish Councillors were considering Neighbourhood Plans.
- Standards of behaviour expected from Councillors and the importance of Councillors understanding that with a public role comes wide ranging responsibilities.
- The process of receiving and investigating complaints.
- The limitations of the sanctions that could be imposed under the standards regime and the need for a pragmatic and solution based approach to be taken when investigating complaints.
- The types of complaints that had been received by the Monitoring Officer, their potential causes and proposed solutions.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the significant changes to the Standards regime, which had been introduced under the Localism Act 2011, meant that the sanctions that could be applied to Councillors, as a result of a complaint being made and the subsequent investigation, were limited. The Monitoring Officer noted that a pragmatic approach to the resolution of complaints was sought where at all possible, as a full investigation and the imposition of a formal sanction, could in the long term make situations worse in Town and Parish Councils if working relationships were already strained. The Monitoring Officer stated that where possible a more informal approach to official sanctions was taken, such as in the provision of training or coaching, and was in most circumstances the most effective solution.

Members of the Committee were in agreement with the Monitoring Officer that the discussion of Neighbourhood Plans at Town and Parish Council level placed local Councillors in an extremely difficult position with regard to the declaration of disclosable pecuniary interests and asked whether the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) offered any guidance on the matter. The Monitoring Officer advised that this was something that he had raised with them; however, the definition and disclosure of disclosable pecuniary interests in these circumstances would still always be an area where extreme caution and sensitivity would be required. Members of the Committee agreed that it would, in the circumstances be very difficult for NALC to produce guidance that would cover all circumstances and satisfy all parties.

Mr John Baggaley, Rushcliffe Borough Council's Independent Person for Standards matters welcomed the Monitoring Officer's focus on promoting high standards of behaviour at Town and Parish Council meetings between

Councillors and noted that continued poor discipline in meetings could lead to a Council becoming dysfunctional and therefore any preventative action in this area was to be welcomed. The Chairman stated that whilst, in his experience, the majority of parish councils operated well, some Town and Parish Council Chairmen did not follow Standing Orders in Council meetings which led to disorderly conduct in meetings and that Town and Parish Clerks did not feel they had the support of the Chairmen to ensure Standing Orders were followed. The Chairman noted that training should be provided to both Chairmen and Clerks in the effective and correct procedures for conducting meetings.

The Committee considered what actions were needed, as well as the challenges that needed to be overcome to support Chairmen and Clerks in Town and Parish Councils to ensure Council meetings were delivered effectively and that mutual respect and good behaviour between Councillors was promoted and maintained. The Members of Committee were in agreement regarding to the Monitoring Officer's important role in maintaining good behaviour and promoting the Standards regime within Town and Parish Council's and welcomed the Monitoring Officer's recent appointment to the role.

It was AGREED that

- a) the presentation of the Monitoring Officer be noted.
- b) the Monitoring Officer submits a report outlining a proposed approach on delivering training for Town and Parish Chairman and Clerks to the next meeting of the Standards Committee.
- c) the next meeting of the Standards Committee be scheduled for October, 2017.

The meeting closed at 6.40pm.

Action Sheet
STANDARDS COMMITTEE - THURSDAY 20 JULY 2017

Minute Number	Actions	Officer Responsible
4	To submit a report outlining a proposed approach on delivering training for Town and Parish Chairman and Clerks to the next meeting of the Standards Committee	Monitoring Officer
4	To arrange a meeting of the Standards Committee for some time during October, 2017	Constitutional Services Team Leader in consultation with the Chairman.