



Committee and date
Standards Committee
3rd July 2012

4 pm

Item

4

Public

**MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON
20 JULY 2011 AT 4.00 P.M.**

Responsible Officer

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Present:

Independent Members:

Mr T Griffiths, Mr D S McLaren (Vice-Chairman), Mr W Maddocks, Mr P Moore, Mr G P Parry and Mr M Salt

Unitary Councillors:

Mrs P Dee, Mr R A Evans, Mr V J Hunt, Dr J E Jones and Mr C J Mellings

Parish/Town Councillors:

Mrs B Carlyle, Professor P Collins, OBE, Mrs A Dugdale, Mrs E M Francis, Mrs R Griffiths and Mr R P Bentley

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED:

It was agreed that Mrs J Clarke be elected Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs J Clarke, Mr J Till and Councillor M Bennett.

3. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED:

That Mr D S McLaren be elected Vice-Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

5. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2011 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Vice-Chairman reported that no public questions had been received in accordance with Procedural Rule 14 before the deadline.

7. **RE-APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS**

It was noted that the Council had re-appointed Mr W Maddocks and Mr J Till, whose initial two year terms had expired, to serve until the next review in June 2012, should this prove necessary following the enactment of the Localism Bill.

8. **FUTURE OF THE LOCAL STANDARDS FRAMEWORK**

Consideration was given to the Monitoring Officer's report on this subject, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes.

By way of introduction, the Monitoring Officer reported that the Localism Bill contained a new duty on principal councils to promote and maintain high standards of conduct among its own elected and co-opted members but would remove the present ethical framework, including the General Principles, Model Code of Conduct, Local Authority Standards Committees and Standards for England.

These were to be replaced with a new Statutory Register of Members' Interests and criminal penalties for failure to comply. Principal authorities would no longer have the responsibility to provide any Standards oversight of

parish and town councils within their areas; neither was there a requirement for those councils choosing to appoint their own Standards Committee to include independent members on that body. She advised that a Member/Officer Working Party would be appointed to consider what practical arrangements were required to provide a less bureaucratic and speedier regime for the future and it was possible that the Council would appoint a Standards Committee including an independent person to act as its Chairman.

A number of members concurred with this approach, adding that simpler procedures needed to be adopted to ensure that matters were concluded appropriately and in the shortest possible time. However, while supportive of these proposals members felt that the Working Party should incorporate some independent members who enhance the transparency and add expertise to the process. Further, they expressed the view that the future arrangements should incorporate provision for the parish/town councils to refer member complaints to the new body for determination, subject to this not being precluded on the enactment of the Localism Bill, even if such arrangements had to be deferred beyond the date the Act came into force.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Council be recommended to adopt a Local Code of Conduct incorporating the standards of conduct expected of councillors in respect of equalities, bullying, intimidation, attempts to compromise the impartiality of officers, disclosure of confidential information, prevention of access to information, disrepute and improper use of position and this be prepared as soon as practicable.
- (b) That a Member/Officer Working Party consisting of eight members, six of whom shall be Shropshire councillors and two others drawn from those representing the parish/town councils and independent members on this Committee, be established to consider how the Local Code will be delivered.
- (c) That appropriate provisions also be incorporated within the new arrangements to enable the parish/town councils to opt in to this Council's Ethical Governance Framework, subject to this not being precluded on the enactment of the Localism Bill.

9. **OTHER ACTION**

Detailed consideration was given to the Monitoring Officer's report on this subject, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes.

Members were informed of the individual circumstances relating to three specific cases involving members of Ludlow Town Council, West Felton Parish Council and Market Drayton Town Council

RESOLVED:

That the other action taken by the Monitoring Officer be noted.

10. **COMPLAINTS ABOUT MEMBER CONDUCT**

The Monitoring Officer’s report on this subject, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, was considered.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

11. **NEXT MEETING**

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, 19 October 2011 at 4.00 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

DATE