

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

6 MARCH 2013

PRESENT

Councillor J. Holden (in the Chair).

Councillors K. Procter (Vice-Chairman), S. Anstee, I. Platt, K. Weston, R. Bowker, M. Freeman, T. Ross, Mr. C.E.G. Griffiths and Mrs. S. Royle

In attendance

Monitoring Officer (Ms. J. Le Fevre).

Senior Democratic Services Officer (Mr. J.M.J. Maloney).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Lamb, Mrs. P. Dixon, D. Higgins, Mr. D. Goodman and Mrs. L. Atkinson

1. MINUTES

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th October, 2012, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE ACT - CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

The Acting Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report which advised Members of the changes required to the Council's Constitution required as a result of changes arising from the Health and Social Care Act 2012 which were due to take effect on 1st April 2013. These related in particular to the formal establishment of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the transfer of the Public Health function to the Council and associated Health Scrutiny arrangements. On the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Committee was advised that, since it was to be a statutory committee of the Council, and certain officers would be included within its membership, they would become subject to the Members' Code of Conduct, over which this Committee had an overview. In line with Article 15 of the Constitution, the report was being referred to the Committee for any comments it might wish to make prior to its submission to Council on 13th March 2013.

An opportunity was provided for Members to ask questions, and these concentrated on the potential impact of the transfer of public health on the Council's existing services and key officers.

RESOLVED: That the content of the report, and issues raised by Members, be noted.

3. "STANDARDS MATTER" - REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

The Monitoring Officer introduced a report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life, which presented a broadly-based review of best practice in promoting good behaviour in public life. Members noted in particular the amended arrangements in consequence of the Localism Act, including the streamlined complaints procedure and changes to local sanctions. Whilst noting that Trafford was historically well placed in respect of the ethical framework, Members did express concerns, along the lines set out in the paper, and emphasised both the need to monitor the effectiveness of the revised arrangements and the significance of the Committee's educative role, particularly in the context of developing models of public service delivery. In this context, strong support was expressed for the continuing role of the Independent Members on the Committee, as promoting a mechanism for objective assessment and contributing to the transparency of the Council's arrangements. In discussion it was agreed that Members should review the paper in detail, and identify any issues on which a more detailed report might be helpful to a future meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the content of the report, and the observations made by Members, be noted.
- (2) That Members review the paper in detail, and identify any issues on which a more detailed report might be helpful to a future meeting.

4. UPDATE ON LOCAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE ISSUES

The Monitoring Officer advised that there were currently no significant issues which needed to be reported to the Committee in relation to specific ethical issues / complaints.

The Committee was advised that, following comments made at a previous meeting, the detailed wording of the Complaints Procedure had been revised to promote clarity with regard to confidentiality aspects of the process; Members reviewed and endorsed the revised text.

The Monitoring Officer briefed the Committee on the current position in relation to Member training on the Code of Conduct / Declarations of Interest. It was agreed that details of the presentation be circulated to Independent and Co-Opted Members, and noted that further training could be made available, including to these Members, in due course.

Members' views were sought on the question of whether Non-voting co-opted members should be invited / required to be bound by the Code of Conduct, which did not statutorily apply to them. In the light of the Monitoring Officer's advice regarding the statutory position and for the avoidance of uncertainty, it was agreed that the Council's approach should remain as currently.

Standards Committee (6.3.13)

The Committee reviewed the current position regarding the completion of Members' Interest forms; and it was agreed that the Monitoring Officer clarify whether forms completed by Parish Councillors should be referred to and held by the Borough Council.

With regard to the Committee's membership, Members were advised that two expressions of interest had been received in respect of the vacancy for a Parish Co-Opted Member. The monitoring Officer and Chairman would agree an appointment process, and the outcome would be reported back to the Committee. It was reported that the resignation had been received of Mrs. L. Atkinson, after her lengthy service as an Independent Co-Opted Member. A similar selection process would be followed as for the Parish Member vacancy; and it was agreed that the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, send a letter of thanks to Mrs. Atkinson.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the content of the oral update be noted.
- (2) That the revised wording of the Complaints Procedure be endorsed.
- (3) That details of the Code of Conduct presentation be circulated to Independent and Co-Opted Members, and that further training be made available, including to these Members, in due course.
- (4) That that the Council's approach in respect of non-voting co-opted Members remain as currently.
- (5) That the Monitoring Officer clarify whether Interest forms completed by Parish Councillors should be referred to and held by the Borough Council.
- (6) That the position in relation to current vacancies on the Committee be noted, and that the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, send a letter of thanks to Mrs. L. Atkinson who had resigned as an Independent Co-Opted Member.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and finished at 7.19 pm.