

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

14 SEPTEMBER 2016

PRESENT

Councillor Dr. K. Barclay (in the Chair),
Councillors K. Procter (Vice-Chairman), Miss L. Blackburn, R. Bowker, C. Boyes, Mrs. L. Evans, M. Freeman, P. Myers, A. Western, Mr. D. Goodman (Independent Member), Mr. R. Brown (Independent Member) and Mr. A. Rudden (Parish Member).

In attendance

Interim Head of Legal Services (Mr. M. Jones),
Democratic and Scrutiny Officer (Mr. J.M.J. Maloney).

Also Present

Mr. M. Whiting (Independent Person).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Dagnall, A. Williams and Mr. C.E.G. Griffiths (Independent Member), and Ms. N. Jackson (Independent Person).

1. ATTENDANCES

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made by Members of the Committee.

3. CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE 2016/17

RESOLVED – That it be noted that, at its Annual Meeting on 25th May 2016, Council appointed Councillors Dr. K. Barclay and K. Procter as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of this committee.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE 2016/17

RESOLVED – That the membership of the Committee, as determined by Council at its Annual Meeting on 25th May 2016, be noted.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE 2016/17

The Committee received details of its Terms of Reference as determined by Council at its Annual Meeting on 25th May 2016. The Interim Head of Legal Services advised that, in order to align these Terms of Reference fully with the role of the Committee as set out in the Constitution, it was intended to expand them to refer to the Committee's role in granting general dispensations and determining requests for dispensations either referred from the Monitoring Officer or received from a Member or Co-opted Member. It was noted that this amendment would be effected in the next Review of the Constitution.

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RESOLVED - That the Terms of Reference of the Committee, as determined by Council at its Annual Meeting on 25th May 2016, and the and the proposed arrangements for expanding them, be noted.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24th June 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

7. DISPENSATIONS

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer submitted a report proposing to continue, and in some cases appropriately update, the arrangements agreed for four years in 2012 covering those general dispensations granted to Members to allow them to participate in Council business where they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the committee grant dispensations for four years to all Members having a disclosable pecuniary interest or prejudicial interest allowing them to both speak and vote in relation to the following functions of the Council:
 - a) school meals or school transport and travelling expenses, where the Member is a parent or guardian of a child in full time education, unless it relates particularly to the school which the child attends;
 - b) the provision of any allowance, payment, pension, indemnity or other financial benefit given to Members;
 - c) housing, where they are a tenant of the Council provided that those functions do not relate particularly to their tenancy or lease;
 - d) setting Council Tax or a precept
- (2) That the committee grant the following dispensations for four years to Members who are elected Members or Co-opted members of another public authority or directors of a Council owned company and who have a disclosable pecuniary interest or a prejudicial interest in a matter only by virtue of the fact that s/he is in receipt of an allowance from that other authority or is an unpaid director of that company:
 - a) Where the issue is a matter of dispute between the Council and the other authority or the company and the matter would affect the financial position of that other authority or that company the Member may speak on the matter provided s/he immediately withdraws from the meeting room;

- b) In relation to other matters affecting that other authority or company the Member may speak and vote.

8. NATIONAL STANDARDS PUBLICATIONS

The Committee received for information two publications of relevance to its role in upholding high standards of ethics and governance, namely the Annual Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life and a House of Commons Briefing on Local Government Standards. Members were invited to raise comments and queries in relation to the papers' content; these centred on the limited sanctions available to the Committee, and the reasons why this Council traditionally and currently experienced an extremely low level of complaints brought under the terms of the Members' Code of Conduct.

In welcoming the papers and the additional local information now reported, Members suggested and agreed that the papers might be supplied by email for information to all Members of Council, and be made available to Parish Councillors; and that they be supplied to new Members of Council as part of the induction process.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the content of the reports be noted.
- (2) That the papers be circulated by email to all Members of the Council, and made available to Parish Councillors; and that that they be supplied to new Members of Council as part of the induction process.

9. INFORMATION GOVERNANCE

Members were reminded of the importance, for the whole of the Council and including Elected Members, of maintaining appropriate security for data and particularly personal information. In the context of the forthcoming audit by the Information Commissioner's Office, Members were invited to consider any initiatives or proposals which might be of assistance to Members in this area. It was noted that generic e-training modules existed, and requested that the officers investigate whether anything specific to Elected Members was available. It was agreed that the most appropriate package should then be made available to all Members, who in the Committee's view should be strongly encouraged to complete it, be made aware of the consequences of not doing so, and advised of a point of contact amongst the officers for any additional queries / issues arising.

In discussion, Members noted that following the issuing of tablet devices it would be beneficial for any laptop computers no longer required by Members to be collected in to avoid any unnecessary information-related risk. It was agreed that the officers, and Councillor Mrs. Evans in her role as Executive Member for Transformation and Resources, would make arrangements accordingly.

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RESOLVED –

- (1) That arrangements be made, with the Committee's strong encouragement, for e-training on Information Governance to be made available to all Members.
- (2) That arrangements be made for laptop computers which were now surplus to Members' requirements to be collected in.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 p.m. and finished at 7.15 p.m.