

STANDARDS

Monday 1 October 2012

Present:- Councillor T Turner – in the Chair

Councillors Mrs Heesom and Taylor J

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cairns, Cooper and Mrs Hambleton.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 19 March 2012 be approved as a correct record.

4. **THE LOCALISM ACT 2011- THE AMENDED REGIME - THE NEW CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS**

Consideration was given to a report submitted by the Council's Monitoring Officer advising Members that the Council had, at its meeting in July, adopted a new Code of Conduct for elected and co-opted members indicating that the Council would continue to have responsibility for dealing with Standards complaints made against elected and co-opted members of this Council as well as of town and parish councils.

The Council had also adopted arrangements for dealing with complaints of alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct both by district and parish councils members. The arrangements, that were set out in an appendix to the officer's report, gave details of the process for dealing with complaints of misconduct and the sanctions which may be invoked against a Member found to have breached the provisions of the adopted Code of Conduct.

The new regime would contribute to the overall ethical wellbeing of the Council and help to encourage a culture of high standards in which the Council and public could have confidence.

The Committee took the opportunity to discuss independent membership and agreed that more than one independent member should be appointed and members were advised that Mr D Wood MBE was willing to continue to fill one of those positions.

A discussion also took place on the size of panels appointed to deal with complaints against Members and it was felt that the Committee as a whole should sit to consider each individual complaint rather than attempting to convene smaller panels made up of members of the Committee that, in the past, had been difficult to arrange.

In conclusion, the Committee was advised that a number of Members had still to complete and return their disclosure of pecuniary interests forms which was in breach of the Code of Conduct. It was agreed that Members should be reminded of the need to return the forms as quickly as possible and that failure to do so was in breach of the Code of Conduct.

Resolved:- (a) That the details submitted of the newly adopted Code of Conduct for Members and the arrangements for dealing with complaints be received.

(b) That the Committee as a whole be convened as and when necessary to deal with complaints made against Members considering alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct.

(c) That Mr D Wood MBE continue as an Independent Member and that the remaining vacancy be advertised in the local press.

(d) That Members be reminded of the requirement to complete and return their disclosure of pecuniary interest forms and that failure to do so is a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct.

5. **GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE ON OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY ON PERSONAL INTERESTS**

Consideration was given to a report submitted by the Council's Monitoring Officer outlining the contents of guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government entitled 'Openness and Transparency on Personal Interests'.

A copy of the guidance had been circulated to all Members of the Council in August 2012.

The Committee considered a flow chart prepared by the Monitoring Officer that, it was considered, would help members of the Council to decide whether they needed to disclose interests in a particular matter.

Resolved:- (a) That the advice contained in the above Government Guidance be received.

(b) That consideration of the flow chart be included as an item on the next agenda.

6. **FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee was asked to suggest areas of work for inclusion in its work programme for the current municipal year.

Resolved:- (a) That training for Members on social networking be included on the Committee's work programme for the current year.

(b) That parish councils be offered training on the new Code of Conduct regime from the Monitoring Officer with the caveat that the training can be delivered to individual parish councils or at one session to which all parish councils could be invited to attend.

(c) That Members be invited to contact the Chair of the Committee and/or the Monitoring Officer if they wish for other matters to be added to the work programme.

(d) That the work of the Committee be reviewed at its last scheduled meeting in the current municipal year (11 March 2013).

T TURNER
Chair